

riod, when there was a disastrous war with Russia, nothing occurred to lead any one, either in Great Britain or Canada, to think disintegration desirable. Our own belief is that the movement in England, to which we have adverted, has had so few supporters that it has completely collapsed, although it may possibly be revived by the recent attempt to create an impression that it is likely to receive encouragement in Canada. Of one thing there can be no doubt whatever, which is that those visionaries who profess to be anxious to prevent the disintegration of the Empire are doing all in their power to bring it about.

#### A COOL PROPOSITION.

The New York *Herald* of the 18th inst. contains a remarkable letter from Captain Babson, Collector of Customs at Gloucester, Mass., dated 17th inst., which is headed "Our fishery interests." "What this great undertaking requires under our treaty obligations." "Important rights in peril." We gather from the introductory remarks that a *Herald* representative called on Mr. Babson, as one familiar with the subject, to obtain from him "a comprehensive statement of the historical aspects of the fisheries and the present relations of our people engaged in that industry with the people and Governments of the British Colonies along whose shores the hardy fishermen ply their vocation." Mr. Babson alluded especially to the treaty of 1818, which in his opinion is the cause of all the trouble between Canada and our fishermen. He frankly admits that by that treaty a complete surrender was made of all the shore fisheries, except those specially excepted. It is satisfactory to have such an admission from Captain Babson, although we have more than once had occasion to cite a similar opinion given by Daniel Webster. Mark what follows: "What is demanded," continues Captain Babson, "as an act of justice to our fisherman is the abrogation of the fishery provisions of the treaty of 1818." Justice to our fishermen, forsooth! A cool proposal from the very fishermen who have procured the abrogation by the United States of two treaties by which Canada conceded her admitted rights for a very inadequate compensation. Capt. Babson adds: "The treaty of Washington will expire on the 1st of next July, and there is no doubt but that Canada intends to enforce the wood, water and shelter to the furthest extent." The sum and substance of the recommendation of Capt. Babson is that the United

States should violate a solemn treaty and set Great Britain and Canada at defiance. Forewarned, we are told, is forearmed, and our Government would do well to take prompt measures to enforce our treaty rights after the 1st July. As usual in all such cases the commissioners who negotiated the treaty of 1818 are said to have been "lost to all considerations of common-sense or shrewdness for having allowed the insertion of a clause forbidding American vessels from entering Canadian ports for any purpose except for shelter or to procure wood and water, thus cutting them off from all commercial privileges, and putting into the hands of the Canadians the power by our own concession to drive our vessels to sea and forbid the purchase of ice or bait or supplies." It is added that "this provision of the treaty is not superseded by any of the clauses of the Treaty of Washington, and is still in force to-day." Captain Babson takes special care to omit all notice of the fact that there was a *quid pro quo*, that Great Britain held that the war of 1812 declared by the United States, had abrogated all the fishery rights previously enjoyed, but a compromise was arrived at by which the United States obtained all the fishery rights they wanted on the southern and western shores of Newfoundland, around the Magdalen Islands, and north west along the Labrador coast, through the Straits of Belle Isle indefinitely. It was in consequence of this most liberal concession by Great Britain that the United States formally renounced all the claims that they would like now to insist on being granted. Even if the American Commissioners had been "lost to all consideration of common-sense or shrewdness," the treaty was formally ratified by the Senate of the United States, and, moreover, it is held just as strongly by Canadian writers that the British Commissioners were on every occasion when treaties were negotiated with the United States "lost to all considerations of common-sense or shrewdness."

#### THE CO-OPERATIVE SUPPLY ASSOCIATION.

The establishment of a co-operative store in this city some five years ago produced no little disturbance in the minds of retail dealers. Whether it proved a success or a failure its operations were certain to have more or less influence upon their business. The idea of a co-operative store would scarcely have occurred to any business man brought up in Canada. It was wholly exotic, and the neces-

sity for it in the great centres of England was the outcome of economic conditions not likely to occur for some time on this side of the Atlantic. The idea was evolved through the gradual decrease in the purchasing power of fixed incomes, inherited or acquired, among government service employes in England—owing in a measure to increased prices of goods in ordinary establishments which, through the losses incurred by the credit system, were compelled to make the good pay for the bad, thus widening the difference between wholesale and retail prices. These people had just so much ready cash to spend, and as they usually managed to live up to their means it became a question how, in the gradually altering state of things, they could manage to eke it out so as to maintain them in the genteel manner to which they had long become accustomed. The co-operative system thus came into vogue, became fashionable, select but not exclusive, and proved more or less successful.

In Canada and the United States the efforts to establish the system have not proved so successful. We do not purpose here to enter into a history of the co-operative association established in Montreal. To an ordinary observer the Association possessed all the elements of success. Its capital was proportionately as large as that of ordinary general retail establishments; its membership [customers] rapidly increased, until they exceeded 3,000. [The present membership is 3,542]. Think of 3,500 customers—representing the patronage of a number of families equal to that of a city of 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, and all paying cash down for everything they buy. One would say that surely something must be wrong if such a concern did not pay. For, notwithstanding the exotic nature of the business, the Association succeeded in drawing to its counters the patronage of people from far and near, Montreal contributing scarcely one-third of the members. Professional people, employes in public and other offices, and even many persons who derived most of their means from sources naturally opposed to the system, flocked to the co-operative store.

But at the outset serious errors had been made in purchasing supplies, especially in dry goods, furs, drugs and other articles where great skill is demanded. Too much or too many of one article were bought. We need only refer to the large quantity of buttons on hand. In groceries the concern appears to have made money, having had the good fortune to secure a trained man for the head of that department. The dry goods department, on the other hand, was a complete failure