

Now, continued Mr. Brown :—

I need hardly remind the House that I have always opposed and continue to oppose the system of sectarian education, so far as the public chest is concerned. I have never had any hesitation on that point, I have never been able to see why all the people in the province, to whatever sect they may belong, should not send their children to the same schools to receive the ordinary branches of instruction. I regard the parent and the pastor as the best religious instructors—and so long as the religious faith of the children is not interfered with, and ample opportunity afforded to the clergy to give religious instruction to the children of their flocks, I cannot see any sound objection to mixed schools. But while in the conference and elsewhere I have always maintained this view, and always given my vote against sectarian public schools, I am bound to admit, as I have always admitted, that the sectarian system carried to the limited extent it has yet been in Upper Canada, and confined as it chiefly is to cities and towns, has not been a very great practical injury. The real cause of a line was that the admission of the sectarian principle was there, and that at any moment it might be extended to such a degree as to split up our school system altogether. There are about a hundred separate schools in Upper Canada, out of some 4,000, and all Roman Catholic. But if the Roman Catholics are entitled to separate schools and to go on extending their operations, so are the members of the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and all other sects. No candid Roman Catholic will deny this for a moment; and there lays the great danger to our educational fabric, lest the separate system might gradually extend itself until the whole country was studded with nurseries of sectarianism, most hurtful to the best interests of the province and entailing an enormous expense to sustain the host of teachers that so prodigal a system of public instruction must inevitably entail. Now, it is known to every hon. member of this House that an Act was passed in 1863 as a final settlement of this sectarian controversy. I was not in Quebec at the time, but if I had been here, I would have voted against that Bill because it extended the facilities for establishing separate schools. It had, however, this good feature, that it was accepted by the Roman Catholic authorities and carried to parliament as a final compromise of the question in Upper Canada. When, therefore, it was proposed that a provision should be inserted in the confederation scheme to bind that contract of 1863 and declare it a final settlement, so that we should not be compelled, as we have been since 1849, to stand constantly to our arms, awaiting fresh attacks upon our common school system, the proposition seemed to me one that was not rashly to be rejected. (Hear, hear.) I admit that, from my point of view, this is a blot on the scheme before the House; it is confessedly, one of the concessions from our side that had to be made to secure this great measure of reform. But assuredly, I, for one, have not the slightest hesitation in accepting it as a necessary condition of the scheme of union, and doubly acceptable must it be in the eyes of hon. gentlemen opposite, who were the authors of the Bill of 1863. (Cheers.) But it was urged that though this arrangement might perhaps be fair as regards Upper Canada, it was not so as regards Lower Canada, for there were matters of which the British population have long complained, and some amend-

ments to the existing School Act were required to secure them equal justice. Well, when this point was raised, gentlemen of all parties in Lower Canada at once expressed themselves prepared to treat it in a frank and conciliatory manner, with a view to removing any injustice that might be shown to exist; and on this understanding the educational clause was adopted by the conference.

Mr. T. C. WALLBRIDGE. That destroys the power of the local legislature to legislate upon the subject.

Hon. Mr. BROWN. I would like to know how much power the hon. gentleman has now to legislate upon it? Let him introduce a Bill to-day to annul the contract of 1863 and repeal all the sectarian School Acts of Upper Canada, and how many votes would he get for it? Would twenty members vote for it out of the 130 who compose this House? If the hon. gentleman had been struggling for fifteen years, as I have been, to save the school system of Upper Canada from further extension of the sectarian element, he would have precious little diminution of power over it in this very moderate compromise. And what says the hon. gentleman to leaving the British population of Lower Canada in the unrestricted powers of the local legislature? The common schools of Lower Canada are not as in Upper Canada—they are almost entirely non-sectarian, Roman Catholic schools. Does the hon. gentleman, then, desire to compel the Protestants of Lower Canada to avail themselves of Roman Catholic institutions or leave their children without instruction?

Let us pause a moment to consider this language. Mr. Brown did not believe in separate schools. He had struggled all his life against that system. But a great object had to be achieved, a noble conception had to be realized, an inspiring idea had to be made a fact, and in order to reach that supreme goal, differences of opinion had to be reconciled, fears and apprehensions had to be removed, misgivings had to be alleviated, and above all the rights of conscience, the tender rights of conscience, had to be placed in as firm a position of security as they previously enjoyed, so that no one could object, and all, without regard to origin or creed, could give a cheerful and enthusiastic support to the new constitution.

Sir, Mr. Brown told his friends that he did not believe in separate schools; but there were fellow-citizens of his in Ontario and in Quebec who believed in separate schools, and, in order to remove their objections and win their co-operation in the scheme which was the great work of his life, he agreed to make the sacrifice of his own convictions. In order to achieve the great object he had at heart, he agreed to fasten upon his own province a system in which he did not believe, but in which others did believe. Sir, for more than twenty years Mr. Brown has been in his grave; but his memory is not dead. And if his teachings and his spirit be still alive, it is surely in the hearts of that staunch yeomanry of Ontario who gave him such constant support during the years of his political struggles. They followed him devout-