

GROWTH OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT

in everything that concerns the Province of Ontario. (Cheers.) Among the many questions with which we have to deal, perhaps there is none more perplexing or requiring a greater knowledge of details than educational questions. The constituency specially interested in legislation of this kind is often learned, sometimes finical, but always critical. Notwithstanding this we have been able, with some measure of success I trust, to make changes in the Public Schools Act, in the High Schools Act, and even in the University Act, which will prove beneficial to the Province. We believed it to be our duty, where the interests of education required it, to amend and improve these Acts. We saw no reason why legislation should not be progressive in educational as well as in other matters. (Cheers.) We were even vain enough to believe that the Separate Schools Act could be improved, that our Catholic fellow-citizens had not obtained perfection in the organisation of their schools any more than our Protestant fellow-citizens, and we flattered ourselves, after several years had passed and one or two elections had been fought and won without any criticism in regard to these changes, that they were acceptable to all classes of the community. Vain delusion! (Laughter.) While all parties, Protestant as well as Catholic, had accepted the changes made in the Acts respecting Public and High Schools as honestly intended to promote education, it is now charged that the changes made in the Separate Schools Act were prompted not by an educational but by a political motive. Our object was said to be not to improve the Separate Schools—that was above and beyond us altogether—our object was

TO CATCH THE CATHOLIC VOTE.

Now do not forget that we are not charged in this case with neglecting the educational interests of the children attending Separate Schools, or with injuring their mental growth, or with fostering wrong methods of teaching, but with angling for votes—with pandering to Roman Catholics. It is not charged that the Roman Catholics attending the Separate Schools do not receive a better education now than they did in '72. (Hear, hear.) If such a charge were made and sustained, then we certainly deserved to be driven from office. If we failed to provide for the 30,000 children attending the Separate Schools of Ontario as good an education as we have provided for those attending our Public Schools, we would have been guilty of a breach of public trust which not only Catholics but Protestants would resent, and that