

abrogated at the first opportunity, which Confederation offered them; and which must again be agitated and re-conquered. Without stopping to individualize, it is to the efforts of the liberal element in this as well as in every other country, that mankind are indebted for every legislation that distinguishes a free from an enslaved people.

Special Legislation.—Let us now turn to special legislation as more immediately affecting us as Irishmen and Catholics. Prominent amongst these is the

SEPARATE SCHOOL BILL.

This measure, pronounced by the Church so vital to the interests of Catholics, so many years a *cheval de bataille* for political parties, was at last settled by the Reform Government. It is necessary that I should briefly review the principal incidents of this vexatious agitation. It will not be forgotten that the leaders of the Reform party in Upper Canada took strong ground against the introduction of the sectarian element into the public schools of that Province. It is not now my purpose to discuss whether they were right or wrong in principle, or whether their policy was expedient. I desire only to point out that in so doing they distinctly and unmistakably declared that their opposition did not arise from any inherent hostility to Catholics, because they happened to be the special advocates of the measure, but on the broad principle that they believed it would be inimical to the general interests of the country, and no less prejudicial to others than to Catholics themselves. Right or wrong, these were their convictions, expressed fearlessly and above board. These are the attributes of honest men, who, at the worst, must be acknowledged an open, straightforward foe, whom you would always know where to find, and for whom consequently you could always be prepared, always guarded, always on the defensive. Their attitude was bold and manly, and cannot fail to command the respect of every intelligent opponent. Contrast their honest, outspoken opposition with the conduct of the Conservatives. Every unscrupulous politician, bankrupt in reputation, every political mountebank and black-leg was ready to go down on his "marrow bones," and not unfrequently did so, sign any written pledges presented to him, even of the most preposterous kind, and make promises to any extent of supporting a Separate School Bill. Honest, upright and worthy men were thus hustled out of power by these charlatans. Even Ministers were not above making these promises.

It will be remembered that, in the general election of 1857-8, Mr. Cayley was defeated in two or three western constituencies. It was then arranged that the member elect for the County of