

desire may seem an intangible instrument, and yet, intangible as it is, it may be enough to form the beginning of what in the end can make the whole difference. Ideas have hands and feet, and the ideas of a congress such as this may affect public opinion deeply. It is easy to fail to realize how much an occasion like the assemblage in Montreal of the American Bar Association, on the eve of a great international centenary, can be made to mean, and it is easy to let such an occasion pass with a too timid modesty. Should we let it pass now I think a real opportunity for doing good will just thereby have been missed by you and me. We need say nothing; we need pass no cut and dried resolution. It is the spirit and not the letter that is the one thing needful.

I do not apologize for having trespassed on the time and attention of this remarkable meeting for so long, or for urging what may seem to belong more to ethics than to law. We are bound to search after fresh principles if we desire to find firm foundations for a progressive practical life. It is the absence of a clear conception of principle that occasions some at least of the obscurities and perplexities that beset us in the giving of counsel and in following it. On the other hand, it is futile to delay action until reflection has cleared up all our difficulties. If we would learn to swim we must first enter the water. We must not refuse to begin our journey until the whole of the road we may have to travel lies mapped out before us. A great thinker declared that it is not philosophy which first gives us the truth that lies to hand around us, and that mankind has not to wait for philosophy in order to be conscious of this truth. Plain John Locke put the same thing in more homely words when he said that "God has not been so sparing to men to make them two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational." Yet the reflective spirit does help, not by furnishing us with dogmas or final conclusions, or even with lines of action that are always definite, but by the insight which it gives; an insight that develops in us what Plato called the "synoptic mind"; the mind that enables us to see things steadily as well as to see them whole.

And now I have expressed what I had in my mind. Your