

so that they will progressively cease to desire to hold each other at arm's length. But such an approximation can only come about very gradually, if I read the signs of the times aright. It seems to me to be far less likely of definite realization than in the case of a group united by ties such as those of which I have spoken.

Well, the growth of such a future is at least conceivable. The substance of some of the things I am going to say about its conception, and about the way by which that conception may become real, is as old as Plato. Yet the principles and facts to which I shall have to refer appear to me to be often overlooked by those to whom they might well appear obvious. Perhaps the reason is the deadening effect of that conventional atmosphere out of which few men in public life succeed in completely escaping. We can best assist in the freshening of that atmosphere by omitting no opportunity of trying to think rightly, and thereby to contribute to the fashioning of a more hopeful and resolute kind of public opinion. For, as someone has said, "*L'opinion générale dirige l'autorité, quels qu'en soient les dépositaires.*"

The chance of laying before such an audience as this what was in my mind made the invitation which came from the Bar Association and from the heads of our great profession, both in Canada and in the United States, a highly attractive one. But before I could accept it I had to obtain the permission of my Sovereign: for, as you know, the Lord Chancellor is also *Custos Sigilli*, the Keeper of that Great Seal under which alone supreme executive acts of the British Crown can be done. It is an instrument he must neither quit without special authority, nor carry out of the realm. The head of a predecessor of mine, Cardinal Wolsey, was in peril because he was so daring as to take the Great Seal across the water to Calais, when he ought instead to have asked his Sovereign to put it into commission.

Well, the *Clavis Regni* was on the present occasion put safely into commission before I left, and I am privileged to be here with a comfortable constitutional conscience. But the King has done more than graciously approve of my leaving British shores.