Looking back over this long career of public service, these forty-odd years of work, of worry, and of warfare, how can we assess the man and the principles which guided him? The task is complicated, but it has this simplifying element, that with Herbert H. Lehman the primary force of the man has lain not in his intellectual faculties, estimated as they have been, but in his character. He is a man of action; not a thinker, not a student, but a doer.

The signal traits which have made him influential have been courage, social idealism, and industry: quiet bulldog courage, constructive sympathy with the neglected and oppressed, and unremitting industry. These qualities gave distinction to his work as governor, head of UNRRA, and senator. Born to wealth, he never allowed riches to limit his sympathies, or bind him with fealty to privilege and class; he always regarded himself as one with the poor. Reared in a self-conscious, closely-knit minority, he was as completely an American as anyone in the country. Exempted, at a comparatively early age, from the task of making a living, he worked all the harder for objects of a more elevated order. He was highly ambitious, but unlike most of the ambitious men about him, he stoutly refused to traffic with expediency. A great deal might be said of his integrity, which was never questioned, of his kindliness, which flowed from an unfailing inner wellspring, and of his optimistic faith in his causes—above all, the great cause of democracy. The main levers with which he moved his world, however, were the three which we have named.

Industry is a common American trait, but not industry as heavy, sustained, and effective as Lehman's. As governor and senator he showed the capacity to work sixteen hours a day. "Yes, I remember going to see him in Washington about some changes in national banking law," says a Californian. "The two facts I recall are, first, that he set the appointment in his office at 7:30 A.M., and second, that he understood the matter at once." It could not be said that he was a prodigiously rapid worker; that, as Dumont wrote of Mirabeau and
Rosebery of Gladstone, he would accomplish in a day more than most men did in a week. But whatever the task, he set at it early, concentrated his powers upon it, marshalled his helpers with skill, and kept at it until it was accomplished. In the campaign to unseat De Sapië, he toiled as long and strenuously as his young associates. Throughout life he has by no means disdained recreation. He has loved outdoor exercise—golf, tennis, walking, swimming, and fishing; in recent years he has still caught tarpon and sailfish in Florida waters. Nobody has enjoyed a good play, an interesting book, a pleasant dinner more than he. But even in his pastimes he is busy.

His social conscience was a more important trait. Its origins doubtless lay in the training of his home and synagogue, reënforced a little by his schooling under Dr. Sachs; but above all in the precept and example of his father, Mayer Lehman. All accounts speak of Mayer as philanthropy and conscience incarnate, and he often took Herbert with him to this or that charitable organization, to Temple Emanu-El, or to Mount Sinai Hospital. The father had an old-world courtesy, a grave urbanity and sweetness of manner, which Herbert partly inherited, partly imitated; but above all, he set the example of an exquisite consideration for others, and of a profound interest in the unfortunate. Herbert Lehman has recorded how he agonized, as a growing boy, over his inability to rise to the level of his parents' expectations. The Jewish circle in which he grew up was one of the most philanthropic in America, and he imbied its spirit. The statesmanship in the organization of benevolence exhibited by Jacob H. Schiff, the practical goodness of Rabbi Gustav Gottheil of Temple Emanu-El, and the visions of the future cherished by Judah L. Magnes, three men whom young Lehman knew well, could not but leave an impress upon him. When in 1914 he became one of the founders of the Joint Distribution Committee, he was thrown into the full current of work for the alleviation of the greatest volume of suffering witnessed for centuries.

This was when Dewey, after his service in breaking the so-called rackets, was elected District Attorney of New York County. As H. Eliot Kaplan, executive director and counsel of the Civil Service Reform Association, writes, Dewey was confronted with the problem of reorganizing his office, for most of the positions were filled by Democrats obviously unsympathetic to a Republican head. When drastic steps were taken, a hail of criticism beat upon Dewey and Lehman as well. "The Governor was particularly criticized by many of his political advisers for permitting the State Civil Service Commission to grant Dewey a free hand by exempting many of the positions from civil service examinations. It was charged that this would permit Dewey to build up a political machine of his own in the District Attorney's office." Mr. Kaplan, at Lehman's request, served as intermediary between Dewey and the Commis-
sion, and helped Dewey obtain the privilege of filling more offices in his own way from his own party. Democratic anger rose high. "Governor Lehman, however, resisted political pressures to embarrass the new District Attorney"—something he could easily have done. As Mr. Kaplan writes, he "was steadfast in his refusal to interfere in an orderly reorganization" of Dewey's office—and it was long before the complaints ceased.

II

In his public labors Lehman had handicaps as well as advantages. His tendency to worry over matters great and small seemed to indicate, as Al Smith and other friends thought, an inability to distinguish properly between minor and major responsibilities. This was probably an accurate judgment in his early career; later, with experience, he both worried less and brought a better sense of proportion to his many tasks. He was long a flat if not an otiose speaker, his phrasing more often tired than athletic, and his delivery monotonous. It is only in his later speeches that we meet an occasional witty thrust or flashing epigram.

He was never a complex man, with the picturesqueness that complexity brings. He had none of the Sinaitic fervors of Woodrow Wilson, the subtleties of Franklin D. Roosevelt, or the sparkle of Adlai E. Stevenson. He has been simple in thought, in action, and above all in obedience to his own fundamental morality, like two men he especially admired, Grover Cleveland and Oscar Underwood. To the general public, though never to close friends, he seemed and still seems colorless—and colorness in a political leader is a handicap. Certainly he is not a man about whom colorful anecdotes have clustered. He has been the despair of reporters and memoirists.

It is hardly possible, for example, to make a good story out of one fact reflecting his sense of duty: his extreme punctuality. It has often been noted. "The thing that impresses me," writes Elmo Roper of their service on the board of the Henry Street Settlement, "is that he and Mrs. Lehman always show up for meetings." For so busy a man the hour fixed, five P.M. on Monday afternoon, is inconvenient; but as Miss Hall, the head, testifies, his and his wife's attendance record is better than that of anybody else. Men who have to come from Forty-second Street may be late; the Lehmans are on time even if they come from Washington or Buffalo. When he was lieutenant-governor, he was promptly on hand daily at one P.M. for the opening of the session of the state senate, though many members lounged in later. Just once he was a few minutes late, and was wrathful to find Senator McNaboe in his chair. "It seems to me," he said cuttingly, "that when I have so often waited on the