

George M. Menninger

ONE of the most devoted Georgists of the Midwest, George M. Menninger, died in January and left a sadly vacant place among Chicago friends of the HGS. He has been the director of that extension since 1962 and one of its most popular instructors. With his wife Claire, and George, Jr., he has been a delightfully welcome visitor at HG conferences and has missed only three of these in 22 years. George, Jr. was born in 1940 and grew up in this pattern—for years he was the youngest person present at the annual gatherings. Few of his generation have gained such a deep natural understanding of Henry George's philosophy. The active study of this and related subjects has been a family venture and shared interest from the very beginning.

As an expert leather cutter, George Menninger was a convinced union member and a champion of the working man. He and Claire were, from the early years of their marriage in 1929, searching for earnest economic causes of the depression. Together they joined a group some eight years later who were studying *Progress and Poverty*.

This Chicago class was a turning point in his life. George Menninger, who realized by then that unionism alone did not have the answers he sought, believed, with Claire, that the land problem lay at the bottom of the injustice many were experiencing.

From the time of their first encounter with *Progress and Poverty* this general subject has never failed to hold the interest of the family. It may be pertinent to note that the particular topic discussed at the first class the Menningers attended in 1938, held at the Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, was the Papal encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII which occasioned Henry George's "Letter to the Pope." Perhaps George Menninger's early home influ-

ence was Catholic; we note that Msgr. John Hegenauer officiated at the burial service held at Covington, Kentucky where interment was made.

On February 11th a memorial service was held for "George Menninger: A Friend of Truth" at the Granville Methodist Church; with Rev. Ruth Ann Bassler officiating. Among friends who contributed recollections or tributes were: Mrs. Carlton A. Olson, executive secretary of the Chicago extension; Dr. Edith McBrady, president of the Henry George Woman's Club; Mrs. Edith Siebenmann, founder-president of the Henry George Woman's Club; Mrs. Eugene Ericson, president of the Sunday Arts Group, and John Lawrence Monroe, director of the Institute for Economic Inquiry. Others who spoke briefly were: Selim N. Tideman, Dr. George T. Tideman, Howard W. L'Hommedieu, Christ Christy, Rev. Fred D. J. Squires and Wilbur Johnson.

Those who knew him best said George Menninger's personality was closely related to his favorite passage—"The Central Truth"—from Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. Like the author, George Menninger had a ready wit and warm sense of humor. He was gracious to all and made his concern felt for persons in many fields. Though he rose to singular prominence in his chosen profession he never lost "the common touch," and even refused the first executive position that was offered to him.

What can we say then of persons like this whom we remember so well but will not see again? Certainly he lives on in the influence that he had on many others in his teaching and in his exemplary mode of life. There are those who are living but who exert little influence. Others whose thoughts and actions were honorable and vital, though they are absent, remain a living force.