

Memorial Resolution on the Death of

Professor Hubert J. Meessen

On May 11, 1962, Professor Hubert J. Meessen died unexpectedly of a heart attack. The shock produced by this inexorable happening gradually gave way to the realization of the loss which his death constitutes for all those who were close to him and for our profession, foremost for the Department of German at Indiana University which he had built up and administered in an exemplary way for fifteen years. His energy, foresight, and loyalty to all with whom he worked established a department whose driving spirit became that of close cooperation in the service of a common cause. Besides being an efficient chairman, he was a true friend to his colleagues and an understanding adviser to all those who needed his help, not least the teaching associates and students.

Hubert Meessen was born in Stolberg, Germany, on February 5, 1911. He came to the United States at the age of sixteen and received his college education at the University of Wisconsin where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with high honors in 1933. In the same year he received his M.A.; in 1937 his Ph.D. His teaching career began at the University of Wisconsin with an assistantship in 1933. After one year as an instructor at Grinnell College in 1935-36, he went to the University of Minnesota, where he taught for nine years, as an instructor from 1936-41, as an assistant professor from 1941-45. During the war, he was put in charge of the Army Specialized Training Program in Foreign Languages. His Alma Mater, the University of Wisconsin, brought him back as an associate professor in 1945, only to lose him after two years to Indiana University, where he was called as Professor and Chairman of the Department of German in 1947.

By that time he had long established himself as a teacher and as a scholar striving to develop in his own way what he admired in his great teacher, Alexander Hohlfeld. Despite the added responsibilities at Indiana University, his enthusiasm for teaching did not slacken, and the courses he taught ranged from Beginning German to graduate courses in German Literature. He also managed to continue his research, particularly on Goethe, Wieland, Schiller, Paul Ernst, and Stefan George, and he still found time for the publication of textbooks which followed new methods and introduced interesting new material on post-war Germany. For the Goethe year 1949, he organized the Goethe Bicentennial Studies, supervised the publication of the volume, and contributed a substantial study of his own to its collection of studies by members of the Department of German and of several other departments of Indiana University. The creation of this work was an outstanding achievement and the volume has been instrumental in making Goethe research at Indiana University known among Germanists in this country and abroad.

He was proud of his association with Indiana University and served with skill and devotion on many committees. At the time of his death, he was Chairman of the Committee on Sabbatical Leaves. He was instrumental in bringing to the campus, as guest lecturers or visiting professors, some of the most distinguished Germanists of today. Aided by his gracious wife, he extended generous hospitality to them, impressed them with his own sterling characteristics, acquainted them directly with the work done in his department, and thus helped make Indiana University known and respected among the most reputable scholars here and overseas.

What Hubert Meessen left us is not lost. Irretrievably lost is his presence, no matter how vividly he may live on in our memory. He himself, however, was any-

thing but a loser in the face of death. He died, at a summit of his life, without a suspicion that death was approaching, after a most successful career. His achievements had progressively found acclaim here and in Germany. Twice he was elected secretary and twice chairman of three discussion groups of the Modern Language Association of America. He was elected Vice-President of the American Association of Teachers of German in 1946 and again in 1962, and President of its Indiana Chapter in 1953. Ginn & Company chose him to be an adviser for their German publications. In 1959 he was invited by the Government of Western Germany for a six-weeks visit. In the morning of the last day of his life he received another honor from Western Germany when the German Consul of Detroit bestowed upon him the Goethe medal in silver of the Goethe Institute in Munich. It was a most happy hour for Hubert Meessen, his family, his department, the Dean of Faculties, and the President of Indiana University who all participated with joy in this celebration. In the high spirits of this hour he returned to his office and from there went to his class when death struck.

Be it resolved therefore that the Faculty Council of Indiana University record its deep sorrow at the death of its distinguished colleague, and that copies of this resolution be sent to his widow, Lois, to Mrs. Dorothy Snyder Meessen, to his oldest son, Frederick, to his daughter, Barbara, and to his sister, Mrs. Eldon Haase.

Respectfully submitted

Hans Jaeger (Chairman)
Norbert Fuerst
Henry H. H. Remak
Samuel F. Will