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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by GOTTFRIED KELLER

A great friend of Switzerland and very distinguished Anglican Churchman has passed away, aged 72, in February in London: Dr. Ronald Ralph Williams, Bishop of Leicester from 1954 to the end of December 1978. My personal acquaintance — and later friendship — with him dated back to the years of World War II. He was then Director of the Religious Division of the Ministry of Information and proved exceedingly helpful to me when, as Chairman of the Foreign Press Association, I had to arrange a luncheon in honour of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. William Temple. The lady who later became the Reverend Williams's wife, came into my circle of friends at the same time, for she was a driver of official cars in the Ministry's pool who occasionally drove foreign correspondents around.

Ronald and Cicely Williams had both become addicts of Zermatt, which for them had for many many

years been a home from home. During the summer holidays of the priest of the local Anglican Church Ronald Williams used to officiate there. One of the many books, incidentally, which Cicely Williams has written, is entitled — characteristically enough — "Zermatt Saga." It would, no doubt, be difficult to say just how many times this loveable couple has spent its summer holidays there.

Ronald Williams was a personality of tremendous warmth and charm. But he was also a distinguished scholar, historian and linguist. Politically and ecclesiastically — while at the same time seeing the need for social change — he was unashamedly a Conservative. Politically he made a number of well researched noticeable speeches in the House of Lords and ecclesiastically he may well be remembered by a speech he delivered in the General Synod in November 1975, opposing the re-marriage in Church of divorced persons.

He held the see of Leicester during 25 years. He was Chairman of the General Synod's Board for Social Responsibility during 15 years and was also much concerned with Britain's entry into Europe. He became the Archbishop's representative in Brussels and became friendly with several leading German Churchmen. On deciding to retire at the end of last year he took a very courageous and wise step: in order not to embarrass his successor by the sheer force of his presence and personality, Ronald Williams made up his mind to leave Leicester altogether and to move to London. After one month of residence there, in a flat in Maida Vale, he suddenly passed away, quietly, peacefully and without suffering. His many friends in England and Switzerland — he was a member of the Swiss Alpine Club — will remember him as a fundamentally kindly man in whose company one automatically felt happy and at ease.



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