

Honoured Scholar

PROFESSOR G. W. von ZEDLITZ, who died on May 24 at the age of 78, was a well-known Wellington personality, and the first professor of foreign languages at Victoria University College. His voice was familiar to listeners throughout the country for the part he took in open discussion broadcasts, for he was chairman of many of the ZB Citizens' Forum sessions, and of the first broadcasts of the *Speaking for Ourselves* panel from 2YA. He contributed to the ZB Book Review panel on Sunday evenings, and was one of the regular reviewers on *The Listener* book page (his last review appears on page 18 of this issue). A series of talks on *Living English Novelists* which were recorded shortly before his death was heard recently from 4YA. In a broadcast tribute from 2YC, Dr. J. C. Beaglehole said of him, "I think he was a great man. He was great not for what he did exactly, not for making an undue noise in the world or for imposing himself here and there, not for shouting any particular gospel at people, but great for what he was as a personality, as a man of peculiar and persevering quality of mind, humane, stoical, wise, of a most noble sense of honour, and always kind."



Spencer Digby photograph

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From what he said that evening and the notes he had made, which Mrs. Morris has permitted us to see, his lecture was to be largely a psychological study of Katherine Mansfield. She had what he called the Cinderella complex. Plain in face and figure, she suffered from the cruelty of children. She felt inferior socially, and at the same time frightened people. In her adolescence she was fed on heady literature: Wilde and Dowson and Symonds, Verlaine and Baudelaire. She fought her family to get away to London again. Then there were her early love affairs. All she knew of life, Morris considered, had come to her at second-hand from her reading, and she was driven to test things for herself because she wanted to write about them at first-hand. She was the little Colonial who had torn up her roots, so that there was disintegration in her life and work. The last passage in Morris's notes reads:

"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" There I think is the essence of her tragedy. The Lord's song was to her her art. She was never satisfied for long with anything she wrote. Of how many stories did she leave only fragments? How many never reached paper at all? Nostalgia dammed her art's flow, or else as in the New Zealand stories it drove her further into her world of fantasy so that she was never able to face reality. Nostalgia had a hand in sowing the seeds of tuberculosis, which in turn isolated her from Murry and destroyed any chance there was of happy life for them. As I have said, other factors come in, but I do think Professor Sewell was right in his suggestion that however necessary it may seem for a Colonial artist to go to live in England, it is a very dangerous proceeding, especially if the artist is a woman.

Guy Morris wrote many articles on Katherine Mansfield. An essay won an award in the centennial competitions, and four long papers which he wrote for *History and Bibliography* are shortly to be published in pamphlet form by the Griffin Press, Auckland.

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