

a constant characteristic: his extraordinary mental energy and appetite for work.

His style as a teacher is best revealed in a testimonial from the headmaster, William S. Littlejohn, supporting appreciatively his application—at the age of 27—for the headship of Nelson College following Littlejohn's appointment in September 1903 as principal of Scotch College, Melbourne:

He possesses the indefinable characteristic of authority, based on a forceful personality, embodying a look that reproves the ignorant, a word that chides the careless, and a moral character that youth approves without being able to analyse it . . .¹⁸

Perhaps the *gravitas* of rectorial office was added to the natural habit of authority evident in his early years; otherwise those who knew him as 'The Man' at Waitaki will assent to the aptness of the words. Littlejohn went on:

The best gift that Mr Milner gives his pupils is enthusiasm. He loves work and he loves boys, and he makes them love work and compels their love. The quality is magnetic and makes his influence powerful in awakening and stimulating the mind . . .¹⁹

The assessment, based on close knowledge, reveals the essence of his classroom style, both early and late. By temperament, by the idealistic cast of his intellect, by his values drawn from Romantic and 19th century humanistic sources, Milner early on adopted as if to the manner born an 'inspirational' and revelatory mode of teaching. Education, above all in the humanities, should not be reduced to book learning or Gradgrindist compliance with examinational prescriptions. Literature teaching must rest upon the appreciative response to original texts. That response he believed depended largely upon the teacher's ability to appeal to the feelings and imaginative sympathies of his pupils. Among the papers from his Nelson College teaching days is a series of extracts, suitably underlined, from Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, which include: 'Enter into their *hearts*—their powers of emotion (sensation) are wider as they are nobler . . . the essence of all vulgarity lies in want of sensation . . .'²⁰ Those who heard his sixth form and other performances in English literature at Waitaki could confirm that the basic approach had neither changed nor lost its magnetic power.²¹

The man appointed to succeed Littlejohn as principal was H. L. Fowler, aged 42, Rector of Invercargill High School, with an apparent fetish for annotated editions of the classics, Latin or English, and comparative charts of scholarship examination results. After the sense of shared purpose and personal affinity experienced with Littlejohn, Milner found the newcomer something of a