Milner of Waitaki: Portrait of the Man. By Ian Milner. John McIndoe and Waitaki High School Old Boys' Association (Inc.), Dunedin, 1983, 218 pp. N.Z. price: $27.50.

FRANK MILNER became a legend in his own lifetime. Long before his death in 1944, Milner and Waitaki had become inseparably linked together in the public mind. Among Waitakians he was known as 'the Man', a nick-name which, used with respect and awe, registered his mana.

The history of the school has already been well told in the histories written by K. C. McDonald for the fiftieth and seventy-fifth anniversaries, and by A. R. Tyrell for its centenary in 1983. Milner is the dominating presence in these accounts. There is also the warmly evocative chapter in Charles Brasch's memoir, which recalls his Waitaki days in the early twenties, the early part of what Tyrell refers to as the school's golden years. But until the publication of Ian Milner's biography, Milner had not been placed squarely in centre stage, where in life he clearly was.

It was a singular career. Where others of his generation — Rutherford is the outstanding example — made their reputation abroad, sometimes returning to the plaudits of the local boy made good, Milner established his claim to fame in New Zealand. If his family circumstances had been different, Waitaki would never have known him. Haslam, his Professor of Classics at Canterbury College, considered him to be one of the three best scholars he had had in his sixteen years in the chair. He urged Milner to go on to Oxford or Cambridge in further preparation for a life of scholarship or of service in the Indian Civil Service. Instead, Milner deferred to his mother's wishes and took up a teaching position at Nelson College. He was 45 before he made his first overseas visit. He took his audiences in Honolulu and California by storm and received tempting offers to take up positions that would give his talents much wider scope than was possible at Waitaki or in New Zealand. But his wife's precarious health was the deciding factor and he turned them down. It was not until he was 53 that he visited the hub of the Empire of which, from one of its farthest frontiers, he had made Waitaki one of its finest schools. He was presented to the Queen, had an audience with the Prince of Wales, and interviews with other notables: accolades of a different kind, and most highly prized.

Milner was a fully home-grown product. He stands with James Hight and Apirana Ngata, two of his fellow students at Canterbury, among the first New Zealand graduates to win national and international acclaim without the cachet of a post-graduate degree from some prestigious university overseas.

The qualities that made for his success were soon acknowledged. He had what his headmaster, Littlejohn, referred to as 'the indefinable characteristic of authority, based on a forceful personality'. But he was not settled on teaching as a career and had a partially completed law degree. His gifts as a public speaker had become apparent through his work for the Temperance Movement in Nelson. Some saw a future for him in politics. He might, in 1903, at the age of 27, have succeeded Littlejohn as headmaster of Nelson College. He was the unanimous choice for rector of Waitaki Boys' High School in 1906.

He transformed Waitaki. He had learnt from Littlejohn and Nelson College how, through the 'driving force' of a 'masterful personality', the 'cultivation of a

wealth of tradition' fostered its 'formative influence on individual character'. No boy he believed, had passed through Nelson College in Littlejohn's time 'without gaining some real conception of what public-spirited service means'. These were fine ideals, the standard fare of speech-day rhetoric. Thomas Arnold and Rugby were the examplars. What was new and important was the way Milner expressed them in the school community he led for 38 years. When he referred to every boy he meant just that: the boy in the agriculture course as well as the boy doing two languages or sciences. Regardless of how they would earn a living, whether they were run-holders' sons living in the boarding establishment, or day boys from Oamaru, they would all be citizens. 'The aim of the school', he declared in 1910, 'was to furnish its pupils with the equipment that would fit them for the lives they were to lead as useful members of society. They wanted the boys to go out as honourable, clean-living men with sound mentality and well developed physically to stand the brunt of a strenuous existence out in the world. . . . Altogether, the School was striving to give the boys something more than would fit them merely to pass certain narrow examinations'.

Under Milner's energetic leadership the corporate life at Waitaki soon became rich and varied. As well as rugby, cricket and athletics, there was swimming, rowing, boxing and shooting, a branch of the Navy League, and a school cadet corps. There was a camera club, a field club for naturalists, and a school wireless station. There was a dramatic society, a literary and dramatic society, a Christian Union, a glee club, a band, and an orchestra. The school magazine was revived, renamed *The Waitakian*, and immediately established itself as a link between the school and those interested in it. Honours boards were erected to remind boys of meritorious performances and to spur them on. Milner used his morning assemblies both to foster a corporate sense and to talk to the school about matters of local, national and international importance. He established an Old Boys Association. He began to build a school art collection, and lined the walls with prints. He built up the library collection. In what other New Zealand secondary school in the twenties could a boy have had access to *Round Table*, *Foreign Affairs* and the *Review of Reviews*, when writing essays or preparing for debates?

That was the reality against which, in 1936, Milner drafted and successfully gained the unanimous agreement of the annual meeting of the Secondary Schools Association to the classic set of resolutions which paved the way for the Thomas Report of 1943 and the Secondary School Regulations, 1945, which laid down the present secondary school curriculum. That is Milner's enduring contribution to secondary education in this country.

There is more that Ian Milner could have said about his father's influence on education at the national level. Partly as a consequence of the way he had constructed his portrait, however, the chapter on Milner, the educational radical, is only lightly sketched. There is a useful clarification of his role in the establishment of the junior high division of the school. But there is nothing, for example, about that other great reform he sought, the reform of University Entrance, which was accomplished along with the reforms associated with the Thomas Committee.

But Ian Milner's portrait is of Milner of Waitaki. Waitaki was his theatre and he drew others into it. The list of distinguished visitors — two royal dukes, every Governor-General of the twenties and thirties, prime ministers, admirals and other military men, prominent citizens — is remarkable. Such a record nowadays would be deprecated as a public relations over-kill. To Milner it was the

continuing personification of the imperial ideal. He was nurturing 'virile Britons', and regular opportunities for them to be in the presence of the great and the famous was an important way of achieving his larger educational objective. The imposing Hall of Memories, opened by the Duke of York in 1927, provided a perfect focus for patriotic feeling and corporate identity. It was soon adorned with battle flags, a platform table, dais and chairs made from teak from HMS *New Zealand*, the ship's bell of HMS *Ajax* of Jutland fame, and many other trophies. There, as the school assembled each morning, it was reminded of the 690 Waitakians who had served in the First World War, of whom 120 had given their lives and 300 had been wounded. There Milner's morning oratory rivetted them. In James Bertram's words in his judicious foreward to Ian Milner's book: 'His most distinctive memorials are a school, a personal legend, and an unforgotten voice'. The voice that edified Waitakians also roused much bigger audiences in other places. His attendance at the Pan Pacific Educational Conference in Honolulu in 1921 and his visit to California were oratorical triumphs. He was dubbed by an American journalist 'the silver-tongued orator from the South Seas'. Even more stunning was his impact on 9000 Rotarians at their International Convention in Boston in 1933. As he sat down the vast audience rose as one man and gave him a wonderful ovation. It was unanimously agreed that he was the oratorical success of the whole convention. Douglas Brass, a Waitakian who became a leading Australian journalist and editor, remarked: 'I have heard a lot of famous men on the platform; the only ones who come near Frank Milner for playing surely and sensitively and eloquently on an audience, were Churchill and Soekarno. And we were his guinea-pigs!'

Forty years on from his death, it is not difficult to place Milner as an idealist at the twilight of Empire. As Ian Milner puts it: 'For Milner the focus of true patriotism was Westminster and Buckingham Palace rather than Wellington'. After the First World War, however, he came to recognize that patriotism was not enough. His experience at the Pan Pacific Conference opened his mind to the importance of international understanding. Posters for the League of Nations now stood side by side on the school walls with those for the Navy League. This is cited as an example of Milner's ability to hold contradictory ideas. Dr Beeby is quoted to the effect that 'the law of contradiction didn't work very well in his case'. Milner paid a price for his celebrity. Others who were less articulate and less engaged in the international tragedy that was unfolding in the thirties were able to live with their contradictions unchallenged. A younger generation of literati, including some of his own most distinguished pupils, among them his eldest son, Ian, were equally engaged in the gathering international crisis but in the service of very different ideals of international understanding and co-operation. They regarded him not as an ally but as an antagonist: he saw them subverting the very ideals he lived by.

Perhaps, if he had become the travelling secretary of the Pan Pacific Union, or a professor of the University of California, he might have modified his idealized views of the British Empire. Perhaps he might have used his oratorical gifts in the service of Anglo-American relationships and better understanding and co-operation among the diverse peoples of the Pacific and Asia. He returned to Waikati and remained true to his imperial beliefs. But he remained his own man. To the disapproval of the Left he added, in 1938, an official reprimand from Rotary for the forthright views he expressed at a New Zealand Rotary Convention on Japanese society and British policy. His general stance was, however, very

much in accord with public sentiment in the years between the wars. It was, after all, the populist leader of a Labour Government who said, at the outbreak of the Second World War: 'Where [Britain] goes, we go, where she stands we stand'.

When it became known that Ian Milner was writing a life of his father, the question in some minds was whether, out of respect for his father's memory, he might fudge some issues. Now that the book has been published those forebodings have been shown to have been mistaken. It is now obvious that only a member of the family, indeed only Ian Milner, could have done Milner's portrait. Milner kept the public and private sides of his life separate. He was a reserved man, with few close friends. But behind the acclaimed public career a private tragedy was being played out. His wife suffered from mental instability. His daughter, Winsome, was stricken with schizophrenia. Ian Milner shared a great deal of this burden with his father, during years when father and son became separated by deepening ideological opposition. He weaves the two sides of his father's life together with tact, compassion, a clear eye, and a sure touch. His text is counterpointed by photographs of the development of the school buildings, grounds, trees and gardens, some of the great moments in Milner's rectorship, members of the family and others closely associated with him. What strikes a reader who never heard Milner's voice is his compelling eyes. The striking physical presence is clearly in evidence and so, too, are suggestions of reserve and loneliness.

Distinguished lives deserve distinguished biographies. In *Milner of Waitaki* 'the boy' has shown himself equal to 'the Man'.

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The Resolution Journal of Johann Reinhold Forster 1772–1775. Edited by Michael E. Hoare. Hakluyt Society, London 1982, 4 volumes. 831 pp. U.K. price: £40.00.

JOHANN REINHOLD FORSTER was a man tormented by spectres and uncertainties. Three 'tedious long years' in southern oceans with Captain Cook nurtured and heightened these fears, making the scientist an awkward and tendentious ship-board companion. Forster and his son George were on the *Resolution* largely for reasons of ambition. They sought to make their way in the English-speaking world by harnessing all possible resources of patronage and pushing themselves forward on all possible occasions. The voyage with Cook was to have established Johann Reinhold's position as a scientist in England and to win him powerful friends, including George III. However, the voyage cut Forster off from such influence and he became plagued by self doubts. Would the voyage produce the rewards he hoped for? Would his former patrons still support him? Would the financial returns be adequate?

Joseph Banks was the occasion for other anxieties. That scientist had treated Forster coolly after the fiasco over the fitting out of the *Resolution*, and the