

commit itself: 'A letter from Mr Fowler was read, with reference to the conduct of the *Nelsonian*. It was resolved that it stand over meantime.'<sup>35</sup>

The gymnastics affair allows revealing insight into the mind and style of performance of Waitaki's Rector-to-be. The idealistic principle in his nature was at the time paramount and given free rein. He acted in the spirit of Milton's *Areopagitica*, one of his permanent sources of inspiration and quotation. He never tired in his Waitaki days of citing: 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.' In the pursuit of Truth, as he saw it, consideration of possible consequences was not relevant. Even after the event he continued to take his stand on principle. The border-line between standing on principle and autocratic judgement is not always discernible to those adversely affected by the consequences. In later rectorial years there were occasions when both Board of Governors and his staff suspected that 'Truth' was what Milner wanted. But by then he had learnt something of the world's need to temper the wind. The causes on which he chose to take an absolute stand were usually carefully selected and justifiable, or at least arguable, in terms of enhancing the school's well-being and prestige. Above all, his proven success as headmaster from the outset enabled him to play his hand firmly. In short, the years somewhat mellowed but did not change the Miltonic fervour of his mind.

Many of the innovations that the new Rector of Waitaki High School made immediately after appointment were drawn from Nelson College experiences. Inauguration of a school magazine, a prefectorial system, debating and literary society, Saturday night entertainment and concerts are some instances. Similarly, to arouse a sense of pride and facilitate the forming of tradition, an Honours Board, both athletic and academic, was installed as at Nelson and steps were taken to make Old Boys' organisations a permanent and vigorous adjunct to the school's life. Changed circumstances and needs brought new responses. And the larger characteristic aspects of his mature performance at Waitaki were yet to emerge in full shape: the Imperial theme (at Nelson College there had been signs and tokens, particularly his absorbed interest in the British Navy, in Lord Nelson, and in Joseph Chamberlain as latter-day architect of Empire); educational reform in the widest sense (the stress on multilateral courses and vocational selectivity, advocacy and establishment of the junior high (intermediate) school at Waitaki, early setting up of a course in agriculture); and the intense interest in international affairs and plea for international understanding based