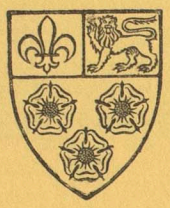
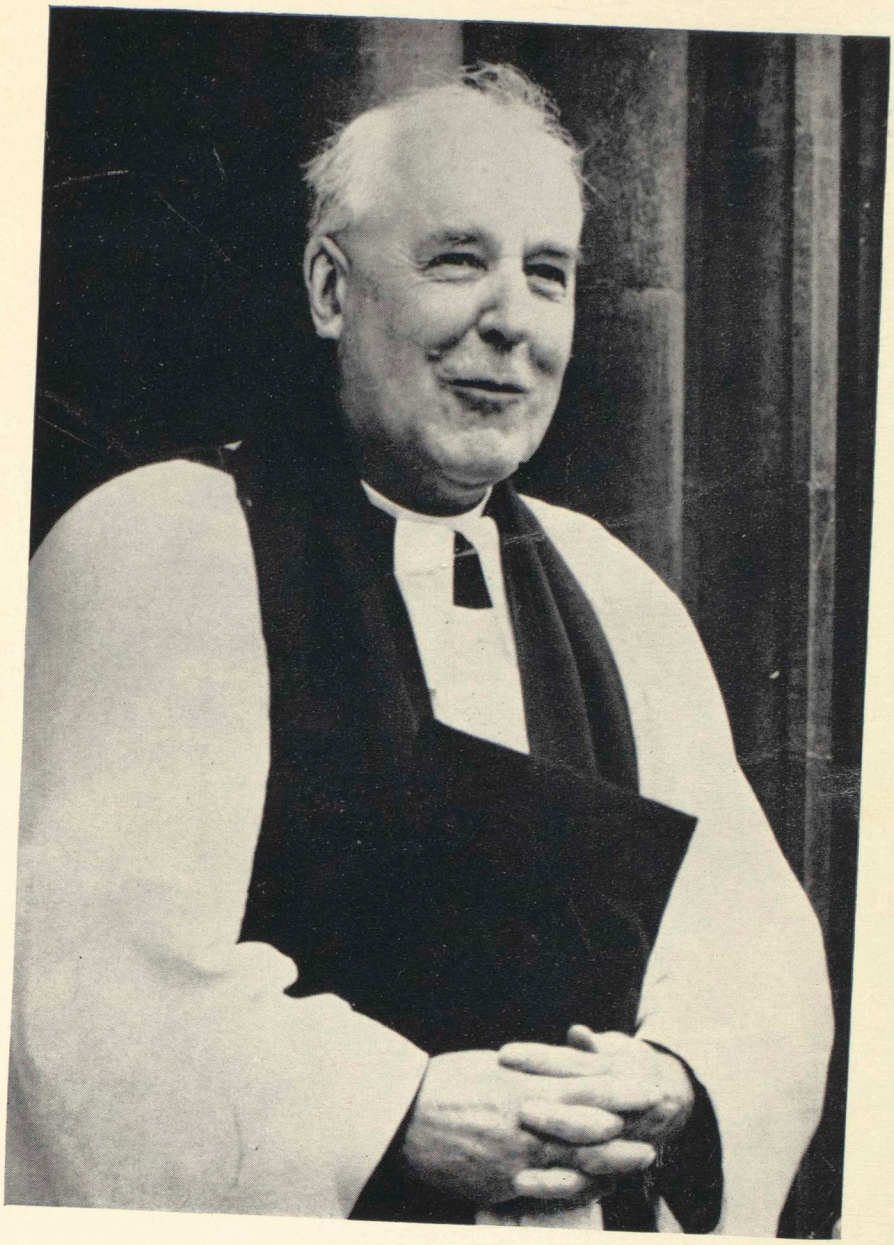


ERIC MILNER-WHITE

1884–1963



ERIC MILNER-WHITE

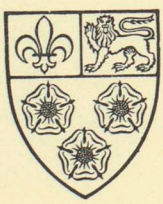
1884–1963

FELLOW
CHAPLAIN AND DEAN
DEAN OF YORK

A Memoir prepared by direction of the Council of King's College, Cambridge

BY

PATRICK WILKINSON



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PREFACE

This memoir could not have been composed without material abundantly and generously supplied by the Rev. Donald Harris and the Very Rev. Philip Pare and with their permission often used verbatim. It owes not a little also to Mr Derek Moylan, Bishops Eric Graham and William Scott Baker, Professor Kenneth Harrison, Dr A. N. L. Munby, Mr J. W. Goodison, Mr M. A. Palmer (Curator of Southampton Art Gallery) and Mr Hans Hess (Curator of the York Art Gallery). Others who have contributed memories include Mr Julian Lambart (Vice-Provost of Eton), Mrs N. C. Laughton, the Rev. John McMullen and Canon E. C. Hudson. The obituaries published in *The Times*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Church Times* and *Harrovian* have also been useful.

The photograph is reproduced by courtesy of the *Yorkshire Post*.

L. P. W.

ALTHOUGH Eric Milner-White parted from King's over twenty years ago, he remained a Fellow in more than name and a regular attendant at least at the Annual Congregation until his death at York, after some months of illness endured with serene courage, on June 15, 1963. He left a lasting imprint on our Chapel services, and still more on the lives of many Kingsmen—undergraduates, choristers and even other Choir School boys—who came under his spell. In addition, he was a man of remarkably varied gifts and enthusiasms, who found time, without becoming merely dilettante, to be a connoisseur of several arts and an expert in several practical fields and yet to keep human relationships in the first place after (or rather as part of) his religion. It has therefore seemed appropriate for us to devote a separate memoir to him, though Provost M. R. James is perhaps the only precedent for this among Fellows who have ended their careers elsewhere.

His character, which remained remarkably the same throughout his happy life, abounded in contrasts and surprises. Abnormally shy and sensitive, he was yet distinguished for physical as well as moral courage; other-worldly, yet scheming; naïve, yet shrewd in business; deeply rooted in the past, yet alive to what was new, especially in

the arts; fastidious in taste, yet liable to strange lapses; idealistic (some would say, sentimental) overall, but with outcrops of tough realism; capable of inspiring devotion in men of 'all sorts and conditions', yet noticeably class-conscious. The *Basileons* of the inter-war years testify to the mirth he could occasion, but implicitly also to his admirable tolerance. In a moral crisis he was a leader of liberal opinion. His optimism and youthful enthusiasm remained unquenchable through eighty years that disillusioned many, so that any enterprise to which he bent himself was apt to prosper. Loyalty was one of his chief characteristics, and what he admired was always 'peerless'. He was a wholehearted partisan of any place to which he had belonged (this enhanced his zest for sport)—Southampton and Hampshire, Harrow, Cuddesdon, above all King's and York. Equally he was a partisan of individuals—undeniably, among his swans there were geese; and he was the centre of a devoted and ever-widening circle of friends.

His family came originally from the Isle of Wight. Henry Milner-White was a barrister who was not above turning to trade, becoming Chairman of Edwin Jones and Co., a prosperous Southampton department store, and a knight. Eric, born on St George's Day, 1884, was the

eldest of four sons at a small house called Langholm. There his mother died when he was six years old. After some time, however, his father was married again, to a childless widow, and the new wife's devoted nursing of his youngest brothers, Norman and Basil, before they died of diphtheria inspired in Eric a deep and lifelong affection: so much so that most people thought that this charming lady, who died only a dozen years ago, was what he always called her, his mother. It may be that his reserve originated in these childhood tragedies; but the surviving family was a happy one. Eric and Rudolph were encouraged to take an interest in whatever came their way, and travel in school holidays opened their eyes to architecture and natural history. Fifty years later Eric could revisit a church not seen since then and comment on changes. 'Where has that rather curious credence table gone?' It was described, the verger unlocked the vestry, and there it was. When Eric was eleven the family moved to a large house to the east of the city called The Deepdene. The local parish church has windows presented by him in memory of various members of his family.

His preparatory school was Highfield, then at Southampton under Mr Wells but later moved by the Rev. W. R. Mills to Liphook, where it

remains. From there he went on to Harrow, to be in Moreton's under Mr Colbeck. (Only a few years ago, though now becoming lame and infirm, he was delighted to spend a summer afternoon in showing a party of Harrow boys round his Minster.) A few incidents have floated down from his schooldays: how he fought the last fight on the 'milling ground'; and how he and his future room-mate in Gibbs', Gerald FitzGerald, were caught evading a compulsory *Messiah* in order to consume a specially rich cake. A few years ago he presented to a girls' school of whose Governors he was Chairman a set of Scott's novels, which he claimed to have read throughout under the desk at Harrow to the lasting detriment of his classics. Townsend Warner, who taught him to write English, was the master to whom he felt most indebted. For the rest, he was made a monitor at an unsuitably early age, which caused him some difficulty and unhappiness and also resulted in his establishing a record by being head of his house for three years. Besides being good at games he read a good deal, was awarded a number of prizes, and finished by winning a History scholarship to King's.

So to King's he came in 1903, a tall, good-looking young man with dark hair parted in the middle and a moustache, full of zest and ideas for

entertainment, and given (as Harrovians sometimes are) to singing those school songs. He revelled in secret societies with elaborate burlesque rituals, and in what he called 'rotting'. He was also a keen cricketer (the faded Hampshire Hogs blazer added tone to many a match between the Fellows and Choir School), played soccer, and enjoyed sport in general. But reading was his chief occupation, and besides getting a double First in History he won the Lightfoot Scholarship in 1906. Already at Harrow, however, he had been stirred by religious feeling, which was strengthened by his continuing friendship with FitzGerald and by new friendships which he formed at King's, with Arthur Edghill, Douglas Hill, and above all Philip Loyd, later Bishop of St Albans, to whom he always said he owed the sacramental nature of his faith. Above all, there was the impact of the Chapel. He decided, somewhat to his parents' disappointment at first, to take Orders, and went on in 1907 to Cuddesdon.

Cuddesdon soon claimed his allegiance for life. It was here, he said, that a great many things which hitherto had been to him vague and unformed first received their form and order. Of course he came to know all about its architectural history, and about its parish church. When he

became Dean of King's he conveyed to ordinands, not so much by propaganda as through their admiration of everything connected with him, that this was the theological college to go to. In the period from 1922 to 1940 there were times when nearly half the Cambridge men in residence there were Kingsmen, whom he recommended in letters which were models of perspicacity and candour but never excluded personal affection. And sometimes ordinands in other colleges switched from some earlier choice after meeting him. Such a concentration was not necessarily a good thing from an objective point of view; but with him it was inevitable, and Cuddesdon was duly grateful. He often revisited it, and it was his diligence and liturgical skill that enabled the new and much revised edition of the *Cuddesdon Office Book* to be made, and printed in 1940. He was the most experienced of the revisers, but he modestly welcomed other men's contributions, and cheerfully agreed to the occasional emendation or exclusion of what was judged to be 'too Milnerian'.

Ordained deacon at Southwark at the end of 1908, he went first for a year to St Paul's, Newington, an important slum parish near the Elephant and Castle, as a curate in a staff of six which included five 'firsts'. From there he followed his Rector to Woolwich, where he

remained for three years, deriving experience of ordinary people which was of lifelong value and organizing activities for boys which had much in common with the new Boy Scout movement. There was an odd and probably fortunate break. He lost his voice through faulty production, and to avoid talking went abroad alone for a year. Thus originated his wide knowledge of European cathedrals, which was to be extended on bicycle tours with such friends as Philip Loyd and Julian Lambart, who remembers him walking, in defiance of Monty James' advice, round the perilous unrailed triforium at Bourges, ninety feet above the floor. He also learnt to appreciate, unfashionably for an Englishman, other styles of architecture than the Romanesque and Gothic. In 1912 King's summoned him back to Cambridge as its Chaplain, and in the next year he added to his responsibilities by becoming a Lecturer in History at Corpus and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram. But very soon war broke out, and he volunteered as a chaplain to the forces, in which capacity he served mainly on the western front, but also for a time in Italy.

To anyone so sensitive and compassionate the horrors of trench warfare must have been appalling, and he hardly ever spoke of his ex-

periences. Late in life he destroyed all his records of that period. In 1915 he suffered a severe blow when FitzGerald was killed. But he himself survived to become, despite his youth, Senior Chaplain of the Seventh Division, and something of a legend himself, as he made a legend of his horse (who else would have called his horse Chrysoprasus?). It is said that during a respite at base he invented a form of wooden chapel that could be very quickly put up and taken down, and that its ingenuity so impressed the authorities that they adapted it as a pattern for army latrines. In 1917 came a crisis the details of which are obscure. What is certain is that he got across Bishop Taylor Smith, the Chaplain-General, a strong evangelical as were the majority on his staff. Milner was one of a group of high church chaplains whose experiences had brought home to them that what the Established Church sanctioned did not always answer to the spiritual needs of the men in the trenches. Something much more simple than the Prayer Book was needed. They produced a book called *The Church in the Furnace*, to which Milner contributed an essay on 'Worship and Services'. One way in which he offended was by offering prayers for the dead, in which he had the strong support of his men. But there was another trouble. While it is

certain that he showed great gallantry in leading stretcher-bearers again and again over the top to bring in wounded from No-man's-land and miraculously escaped unscathed, it is also said that, when all the officers in his unit were killed or wounded, the men asked that the padre should take command and he did so, thus becoming a combatant officer. Whatever the cause, he was sent back to base, but also mentioned in despatches and awarded the D.S.O., for which he was reputed to have been already recommended three times. Months before hostilities ended he was out of the army.

The College reacted by electing him to a Fellowship in March, 1918, and by offering him in July the office of Dean in succession to Dr Brooke. He did not accept without painful heart-searching, for he had almost decided to join the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield with his friend Frank Millard. But Father P. N. Waggett, happening to call on him, turned the scale: 'Accept the College's offer and devote your life to it.'

The new Dean, thirty-four years old, presented to the College Council a memorandum on the future of the Chapel which is a model of tact and written in his authentic style, with 'aught' and 'none other' and 'no whither'. While still prejudiced in favour of compulsory services, he felt

that they were indefensible in argument and recommended that the rule should be 'lightly administered'. He had no illusions that it would be anything but hard to maintain after the War, and added: 'The falling off in numbers of undergraduates at morning service on Sunday does not distress me so much as it does Mr Tilley.... What remains is all the more real and keen.' Short services without the Choir, including a five-minute address by a member of the Society not necessarily in Holy Orders, might be tried as an extra (they have recently been introduced). It is interesting that, in deference to the feelings of others, he was at that time opposed to substituting Eucharist for Matins on any Sunday. Against the recurrent pressure for more congregational singing he argued (perhaps not quite convincingly) that since the acoustics of the Chapel are such that you can hardly hear your neighbour, the communal value would be lost. Ante-communion followed by a break in which some people went out, as was then the custom, he considered liturgically meaningless. The Church of England, he asserted, was undergoing a Second Reformation, in which 'the extraordinary potentialities of our Chapel for the whole religious life of England should not be overlooked': it was more than the Chapel of an intimate society:

King's, unlike most cathedrals, was free to experiment and take a lead. What he advocated was a series consisting of Matins, Litany and Eucharist which, if repetitions were excised, would last for an hour and a half, with breaks during either of which people could leave. This proposal apparently did not catch on; but another, that we should experiment with special services on various occasions, certainly did.

For in that same year, six weeks after the Armistice, he introduced on Christmas Eve a 'Service of Nine Lessons and Carols'. It was suggested by a form devised in 1880 by the Rev. G. H. S. Walpole for use at Truro and spread by the then Bishop, Benson, when he became Archbishop of Canterbury three years later. But essentially it is Milner's creation, and the bidding-prayer is unmistakably his. (Incidentally on that first occasion the now traditional beginning with 'Once in royal David's city', with Dr Mann's fine harmonization, peculiar to the College, was preceded by the carol 'Ding, dong, ding', sung in the organ-loft by an unaccompanied quartette.) The service was first broadcast in 1928, and it now commands a B.B.C. audience second in the year only to the Sovereign's Christmas message, besides being imitated, and replayed on records, all over the Anglican world. In 1934 Milner

introduced the processional Advent Carol Service, completely devised by him to suit our Chapel, with significant movement used as an element of liturgy. Its elaborate ritual has not since been altered: it could hardly be bettered.[1] When Keynes once took his wife, the famous ballerina Lydia Lopokova, she exclaimed, 'Now we know why the Dean is such a lover of ballet: he is the best choreographer of us all'.

But at the outset the new Dean had a very delicate task to perform. Dr Mann had held the post of Organist for more than forty years with great distinction, and had won the love of the College, and of Milner not least, by his personality. But naturally his tastes were Victorian. For him Stanford, Parry, Macpherson, and Alan Gray of Trinity were the acceptable 'moderns', but Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells—'newfangled stuff'. Nor had he any use for the great Tudor music then being literally rediscovered, or the English Hymnal, or Plain Song. But little by little the Dean won his way: *Stainer in E flat* and such like retreated into the vacations. He himself contributed much to the beauty of the services by the intoning of his fine tenor voice;

[1] A good account of these Carol Services and their origin is given in *The English Carol*, by Erik Routley, pp. 229–32, 248–52.

and meanwhile Dr Mann's own reform of introducing Choral Scholars in place of lay clerks was having its effect.

Milner also directed his expert attention to the Chapel fabric. First the south-east side-chapel was fitted up as a war memorial, with fine ancient glass recovered or presented (some by himself in memory of FitzGerald). Then the north-east one had its east window enriched with a mosaic of fragments of ancient glass. Next he purged the two north-western side-chapels of the horrors introduced in 1875 as heating apparatus and fitted them up in 1928 and 1935 respectively as Provost Whichcote's and The Founder's Chantries. (When he opened Provost Goad's seventeenth-century tomb in the latter he found only the imprint of a body and a boar's tusk.) The windows he gradually adorned with quarries of old glass. His friend A. B. Ramsay recounted with sly relish how Milner once, returned from a tour in France, remarked casually, 'The glass at —— is in a disgraceful condition, with the leading half gone: it comes away in your hand'. But in fact they are honest English quarries. He was already acquiring an encyclopaedic knowledge of stained glass, and he added an appendix on the side-chapel glass to Monty James' guide to the great windows of the Chapel. This knowledge proved of immense value

when war came again, and one by one the windows were taken out and the rectangular sections stored in the cellars of Gibbs' Building and elsewhere in Cambridge.

Milner's duties as Dean included teaching divinity once or twice a week at the Choir School. Like many shy people he got on specially well with children. This humorous, smiling ex-chaplain to the forces made a complement to the impressive but Orbilian headmaster Mr Jelf. Among those who remember his lessons with pleasure is the present Archbishop of Canterbury. He loved boys, and had a fanciful, boyish sense of humour. Indeed he was probably never more happy than at the camp he ran every August from 1921 to 1939 at Batcombe in Somerset, in the orchard of Mr and Mrs Gerald Coney, who had two boys at the School. He kept perfect control amid an elaborate nonsense of hierarchy and ritual in which he was 'The Archbishop', referred to as 'The Arch' and addressed as 'Your Grace'. The curious will find a vivid evocation of the atmosphere in *The Book of Hugh and Nancy*, a novel published in 1937 about an orphaned brother and sister of which the first part, featuring Hugh as a chorister at King's, was written by Milner and the part about Nancy by his friend Miss Eleanor Duckett, the Girtonian historian now at

Smith College. It expresses a side of his nature which some may find reminiscent of another Eric.

Among the Fellows, many of them agnostics, he was accepted as an 'institution', with a mixture of admiration and amusement. They enjoyed seeing through his schemes, and sometimes he bamboozled them. In chapel matters he was more and more given his head. If not given it, he took it. On one occasion he appeared at the Council with an exquisite Peruvian chasuble, which he had bought from a gift made some time previously for chapel purposes. It was duly admired till Gerald Shove took courage to say, 'Is my memory at fault, or did we decide to devote this money to buying some iron gates?'; whereat all the other members said, 'That was just my recollection, but I was thinking I must have been mistaken'. There was much embarrassed aspiration from Milner, who appeared genuinely surprised, but the chasuble remained.

As Dean of the College he shared with a younger lay Dean responsibility for day-to-day discipline. His shyness occasioned many stories. To the freshmen on his first call who, after five minutes of silence, burst out in desperation 'I see you have a gas stove', he replied after some gentle puffing and blowing, 'So I have'. To another undergraduate who had met him at the

Front Gate and walked with him in silence all the way to Bodley's he finally volunteered, 'Snow is predicted'. The puffing and blowing introduced all imitations of him, which were legion. In one play-reading society all sacerdotal parts were by convention read in a Milner voice, at whatever cost to the overall effect, from Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* to the somewhat dubious case of Pothinus in *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

The wheezy call of incense-breathing Dean

was a gift-line in a *Basileon* parody of Gray's *Elegy*: and in general his image was that of a ritualist:

Milner-White
Looks well by candle-light;
That's why
We have our service high,

ran a clerihew in the same number. He exaggerated his own foibles and encouraged jokes about them—his fondness, for instance, for walnut cake and 'marzipan potatoes' and for 'spotted dog', which he confessed to seeking at the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London when his solicitous housekeeper banished it from the Deanery at York. 'Cream is my alcohol', he once purred when pressed to take another glass of wine. He would tell with wistful amusement how, the first time he took a wedding, he dropped the ring down

a grating, and how at another wedding he pronounced with impressive unction, 'Those whom God hath put asunder, let no man join together'.

His discretion and tolerance made him an adequate, and occasionally inspired, disciplinarian. When the Jesus Boat Club invaded the College one bump supper night he treated it as a courtesy visit, got their President to line them up, and shook hands with them ceremoniously as he ushered them out of the Front Gate. A truculent drunk to whose ranting he had been patiently listening was suddenly cowed by the quiet interruption, 'No swearing, please'. During the General Strike of 1926 he collected a band of undergraduates to live on a liner at Hull and unload cargo in the docks. It was a harmonious party, and Milner worked as hard as any. In the 'twenties he gave lectures for the History Faculty on the Renaissance in England. His Friday evenings in College were sometimes devoted to literary rather than theological subjects; and he played a valuable part in general education, taking one undergraduate, for instance, for an architectural walk, another to a Greek play. But if it is true that he was considered in the 'thirties for the headmastership of Harrow, it is surprising. That was even less his *métier* than a bishopric would have been.

More than most of our Deans he distinguished clearly, though courteously, between his Chapel flock and the rest of the undergraduates. Christian names were almost exclusively for the former. Anyone who showed an interest in joining the flock was at once accepted, all shyness soon forgotten. For them he instituted 'The Saints' Breakfast' in the Combination Room after Communion on Sunday. Anyone who needed special help, or simply an older friend, found him ready, never too busy, and constant. To some also he secretly gave timely financial help. Lifelong friendships resulted, and not only with undergraduates but with Choir School boys, whom he prepared for confirmation in weekly classes that began with buns and were interspersed with jollity while Christianity was commended as a romantic adventure. Archbishop Davidson expressed a belief that he was responsible for more ordinations than anyone else in the Church of England. Many would be taken for unforgettable holidays, at home or abroad, 'Who are you, sir?' asked a roving reporter at Copenhagen Station, impressed by the tall figure in a Tyrolese cape. 'Oh-h... King's.' 'King of where, sir?' 'Oh-h... Ah-h... King's.' It was perhaps not wholly accidental that Kingsmen later gravitated to York. At the time of his death John McMullen was Sacrist

(having succeeded David Stewart-Smith) and Sub-Chanter (as David Senior had also been), and Paul Burbidge was Chamberlain, of the Minster; Donald Hewitt was Master of the Song School, Basil Norris Diocesan Director of Religious Education, and Noel Kemp-Welch Chaplain of St Peter's School. The new King's Anthem Book which he had helped to compile is authorized, by permission of the Council, for use at York. A special altar in the Minster was appointed for Kingsmen from all over the Diocese to communicate at Christmas. And visitors who are sensitive to heraldry as a science should not scrutinize too closely a wrought-iron cartouche which displays the arms of York spuriously quartered with those of King's.

Despite his many interests, some of them wholly secular, Milner-White was always first and foremost a Christian and a priest. At King's his day began with Communion at 7.30 and meditation from 9.30 to 10.0. In his ideas he was a follower of Bishop Gore (another Harrovian), in the *Lux Mundi* tradition of devotion tempered by critical scholarship. Though in some ways he was naïvely unaware of the facts of life, he had the reputation of being a wise and helpful confessor. He always insisted that humour was not

incompatible with religion, indeed that gloom was paralysing to it as to all other activities. At Cambridge his religious activity extended far beyond the College. He was a founder-member, and from 1923 to 1938 Superior, of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, a small group started before the First World War by Anglican priests of the same generation, most of whom held posts in the University, including John How, Wilfred Knox, Edward Wynn, and later Alec Vidler. This meant a great deal to him, and on the title-page of one of his books he styled himself Superior of the Oratory and Dean of King's, in that order. Many Cambridge men will remember him as President of the Sacrae Trinitatis Confraternitas, which had been founded by a Kingsman, George Williams, in 1857. His Friday evening gatherings at King's were something of an antidote to the more adventurous sallies of the Theological Faculty. Before he left King's he was made a Canon of our Visitor's cathedral of Lincoln. With the Church of Rome, unlike some High Anglicans, he did not flirt. Its attitude to the Liberal movement associated with Acton, von Hügel, Loisy and Tyrrell offended him as a historian, and he could perhaps be accused of intolerance; though in his later years, after showing the east window at York to some Benedictines from Ampleforth

who wanted to see it at close quarters while the scaffolding was still up, he exclaimed, 'If all Romans were as they, we could be reunited to-morrow'. Otherwise he was much interested in contacts with different churches, particularly those of Scandinavia.

It was at Cuddesdon that he developed his interest in liturgy. He devoted much study to its history and significance, and was President from 1943 to 1959 of the Henry Bradshaw Society. To him it was a way of glorifying God by meaningful and harmonious symbolism, not an opportunity for ecclesiastical exhibitionism. He was a great deviser of special services, such as the Epiphany Procession which he introduced at York in 1947 and which caught on like his King's Carol Services. He improved the order for the enthronement of Archbishops, and himself enthroned three, Garbett, Ramsey and Coggan, in the last case bravely rising from his sick-bed; and he ordered the service for the wedding of the Duke of Kent, the first royal wedding in the Minster since 1328. With the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England, on which he sat from 1955 to 1962, he found himself out of sympathy. He felt in particular that the proposed new services for Baptism and Confirmation were too complex for ordinary

people, who would hear them only once or twice in a lifetime.

In Convocation and the Church Assembly he was listened to with respect. Many committees also profited from his active attention. He was Chairman of the Commission on the Recognition of the Saints. For some years he was one of two Vice-Chairmen of the Central Advisory Council for the Care of Churches. His Chairman was Seiriol Evans, Dean of Gloucester (another Kingsman), who has written: 'Faced by the most ordinary church, filled with dismal furniture and depressing ornaments, he saw at once how it could be made into a shrine, if only people had the courage and the love to do it.' Objectors to the introduction of modern-style works of art were apt to find with surprise that authority in so venerable a form was on the progressive side. On the other hand he was, it goes without saying, a member of the Historic Churches Preservation Trust. As Chairman of the Diocesan Advisory Committee he did good work, though his views were not always popular.

His literary output was steady, if not voluminous, up to the Second World War. Best known is *My God My Glory* (1954), the last of his books of devotions, widely used and appreciated, which can now be obtained as a paperback. A final,

enlarged edition, prepared by himself shortly before his death, is being published by the S.P.C.K. At the time when the ill-fated 'Deposited Book' was being debated he published *A Reconsideration of the Occasional Prayers*. Other characteristic titles were *Cambridge Orisons*, *The Cambridge Bede Book of Prayer*, *After the Third Collect*, *A Procession of Passion Prayers*, and (with Canon Briggs) *Daily Prayer*. Much of the meditation for these was done in the Fellows' Garden, some on holidays. Owing in part to arthritic pain, he became an increasingly bad sleeper, and he pondered and wrote in the wakeful hours of the night. But he might equally be composing prayers in a hotel lounge, or, as he confessed once, 'during an excessively dull and repetitious speech in the Church Assembly'. By the time of the Second World War the Church had come to turn to him for special forms on National Days of Prayer, and requests came later from many parts of the world. 'Cranmerian' was an epithet often applied to him. His last prayer, dated February 1963, may serve as an example. It was written at the request of the Rector of Billingsgate as a collect of blessing for the fish-porters of that market, in language such as is not generally associated with them:

'O Lord Jesus Christ, who after Thy glorious resurrection didst prepare by the waterside a

breakfast of fish for disciples that had toiled the whole night long: come amongst thy servants who toil beside our river day by day to provide food for their fellow men, and bring Thy blessing both on their work and on their lives, O Lord our Saviour and help for evermore.'

From 1948 to 1962 he did invaluable work on the Literary Panel of the Joint Committee of the New Translation of the Bible, and was working on the Psalms right up to the time of his death. This was a great consolation to him as he became less active in body. On a holiday in Cornwall, for instance, he would sit on a bench at the top of a cliff with a friend who had read Classics, oblivious of lunch-time, working out a version by trial and error, then comparing the previous versions, often with some complacency but generally with admiration for the achievement of Ronald Knox. On the panels the translators would sometimes be stumped and adjourn to sleep on a problem, to be relieved next morning when Milner came down with the *mot juste*.

Besides his devotional works, he contributed to *Essays Catholic and Critical* (1926) a chapter on 'The Spirit of the Church in History' which was well received; and in 1929, when his friend Father Vernon Johnson, converted to Rome, produced *One Lord One Faith*, he collaborated with Wilfred

Knox in a reply entitled *One God and Father of All*. Though he was eight times select preacher at Cambridge and once at Oxford, preaching was not his *forte*. Despite his fine voice and his turn for arresting phrases, his style was too precious for the ordinary listener. The sentiments (that seems a more appropriate word than 'thought') might be exquisitely phrased, but you could not remember what he had said. He lacked the common touch. Steeped in the writings of the Caroline divines—Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Traherne (his *Centuries of Meditations* a favourite)—he was liable to speak even on ordinary topics in a seventeenth-century idiom which repelled some as affected but delighted collectors of Milnerisms. He savoured words, and shunned not only the banal but even the normal. 'Ever thine' concluded his letters to ordinary friends. Who else would have prescribed 'Courtesy is of Christ' as a motto for a girls' school? At the age of twenty he had gaily written under 'Ambitions' in a Victorian Book of Confessions, 'To be rich and famous, preferably as a man of letters'. Archbishop Fisher conferred on him a Lambeth Doctorate of Divinity, but it must have given him singular pleasure when, in the last year of his life, he was made an honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of Leeds.

How he also became rich is another story. He inherited from his father the abilities of a business man and about £40,000, but increased his talent many times by diligently learning about investment at King's from Maynard Keynes. He tended to be more venturesome than his broker, foreseeing what new line of what firm was likely to supply a need, and often he was right. He was quite unsentimental about money, though careful to invest in what seemed of some use to the community. Commerce might be inseparable from a certain amount of sin, but it existed inevitably and had better be exploited by those who would use the proceeds to good ends. After he left King's he waived each year his right to pension and to dividend as a life Fellow, an act which amounted eventually to a gift of some £10,000 plus interest. More money came to him on his mother's death. It is known that in his last decade he made gifts to the value of over £100,000, and before these he had made many more, besides contributing generously to the education of his numerous godsons.

From 1944 to 1959 Milner was a member of the Advisory Council of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Any account of his artistic interests must begin with stained glass. Reference has already been made to his work at King's; but he

had another line of his own. Long before John Betjeman wrote he became an enthusiastic connoisseur of nineteenth-century glass. For a number of years after he acquired his long-suffering car (characteristically named 'Canticles') he would spend part of his summer holiday in visiting the churches in some given area, later to be remembered with remarkable accuracy. The rule was that every one, however unpromising, must be visited: you never knew what you might find. With what excitement did he make his first discovery, in a rather shabby tabernacle at Cleeve, of a window designed by Francis Spear! Usually he could name the design or firm of each window; but he was stumped by a group of windows round Wellington in Somerset, which he was reduced to ascribing, from a feature common to many, to 'The Master of the Hirsute Magdalene'. A trio of artists were named 'the three terrible W.s'. For Kempe's work, on the other hand, he had an almost uncritical admiration; and Sir Ninian Comper could do no wrong. It is a pity that circumstances deprived him of time to write the book he once planned on the Victorian revival of stained glass. He always insisted that glass should be married to architecture. For this reason he disapproved strongly of Evie Hone's design for the east window at Eton, which overrode the archi-

tecture, as he felt. He could not attend the meeting at which it was adopted, but the letter he wrote only hardened contrary opinion. He also criticized the artists of Coventry for concentrating on colour and esoteric symbolism rather than self-evident illustration for everyman. What he himself did at York shall be recounted later.

Visitors to the rooms overlooking the Cam in Kennedy's new extension to Bodley's Building, into which he moved from his ground-floor set in Gibbs' in 1933, saw one of the finest private collections of modern ceramics. Here instinctively discriminating taste had been the guide: it was not a case of simply following the market. In 1939, in memory of his father, he gave to Southampton Art Gallery 47 pieces by the leading studio potters, including 12 by Staite Murray, 10 by Bernard Leach, and 8 each by Shoji Hamada and Charles Vyse. Two by T. S. Haile are particularly valued, and several have figured in exhibitions of ceramics such as that of 1961 in Rotterdam. It was a most unusual collection for those days. To the City of York Art Gallery he gave his collection of modern English stoneware, with pieces by 16 artists. He was one of the first to realize the importance of this ware, collecting works by Leach and Murray long before they were well known. The first of his many gifts to

the Fitzwilliam consisted of two pieces by Murray, presented in 1947. Next year he began giving paintings to it—a small Whistler, then a Gwen John, landscapes by Courbet, an early Gauguin, a Camille Pissarro and a Signac. He has left other gifts of paintings, rugs and so forth to the Museum, the most notable being a second Pissarro, *Effet de neige, Eragny*, of 1895. He also gave some forty paintings to the York Art Gallery. What he liked was small, intimate pictures you could live with. His favourite artists for purchase remained those who had been truly modern when he was young—Whistler and Sickert, Conder, Tonks and Wilson Steer; but younger painters such as Stanley Spencer are also represented, and he was a good friend and patron to rising artists. These painted pictures within his means; but his range of appreciation was much wider. The College gave him absolute discretion in dealing with its portraits, and some of the best ones in the Hall were procured by him—the Reynolds, the two Romneys, Walsingham's and several others. His last speech to a college Congregation was a plea to the Fellows (he could not have known that there would be no opposition) to welcome Major Allnatt's fabulous offer of Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi*. Though now infirm, and on a brief visit only, he had gone to some pains to explore the

feasibility of placing it behind the High Altar, which was characteristic of his readiness to adventure when he might easily have been forgiven if he had defended the old and familiar in nostalgic memory.

All arts and crafts interested him. Some may recall a fascinating fanciful article in the *Cambridge Review* on the lamp-posts of the town—'Waterloo' type (modelled on captured French guns), 'Umbrella', 'Waterhouse' and so forth. He knew good wrought iron when he saw it, and which blacksmiths still worked it well. Persian and Caucasian rugs were also among his delights. But he loved nature and natural history as much as art. Not many were aware that he had a wide knowledge of British birds, and a good collection of books about them. Late in life he also became a keen grower of flowers and flowering shrubs. The Duke of Edinburgh was once trapped in the Deanery by a consignment of rose-trees which happened to be dumped in the drive while he was being entertained there. The hundred varieties of erica in his garden were a characteristic whim—not only was he Eric, but his devoted housekeeper, sister of the Pare brothers, was Erica.

He was also a lover of books, including rare editions. The Library of York Minster was greatly enlarged and enriched by his care and

generosity. On becoming Dean he found that more than half remained in the general funds from about £25,000 realized by the notorious sale of the Caxtons, the Minster roof having proved to be much sounder than had been feared. He immediately got this converted into a library endowment: thus York is one of the few Cathedral libraries with an assured income, which has enabled additions to be made to a collection which was already of high distinction. It was his ambition that it should be made into a first-class library and linked with that of the University that was his dream. To this end he invited Dr Munby to write a report on it for the Chapter, and persuaded them to engage a qualified assistant librarian to make a proper catalogue. It was already a major treasure-house for researchers; and he enriched it with valuable collections on stained glass, Christian iconography, ecclesiastical art and architecture, religious verse and drama, and Christian mystics. He also paid himself for a wing to be added to house the muniments and the Hailstone Collection of some 10,000 volumes on local history; and a further extension was nearing completion at his death. Another library, which with other enthusiasts of the York Civic Trust he established in the restored St Anthony's Hall, was the Borthwick Institute for Historical Re-

search, to which were entrusted important collections including the archives of the Archdiocese. (King's, out of regard for his activities, and to his delighted surprise, contributed £1000 towards this from its Special Purposes Fund.) He also helped the Trust to establish in the old church of St John, Ousegate, the York Institute of Architectural Study. Even his light reading merged into bibliography. In the Deanery there was a small room lined with detective stories only, in complete first editions, author by author, arranged in order of publication. These were never lent.

Milner delighted in music of all kinds except 'palm court' and 'pop'. He was also an assiduous theatre-goer, but still more a balletomane. A colleague was watching a ballet at the Cambridge Arts Theatre one evening when a panting figure loomed up and settled into the empty seat beside him with the whisper, 'So sorry to come in late: just back from a matinée of the ballet in London'. Eight hundred programmes stood bound on his shelves. He knew Margot Fonteyn and met every member of the Vic-Wells Company. They all signed a dancing-shoe and sent it to him on an occasion when he had put up two girls from the corps de ballet at the Deanery.

Speaking at a dinner in King's after he had been some time at York he began: 'Mr Provost, I have

fallen in love—with the Lord Mayor of York. The Lord Mayor of York is—oh-h-h, ah-h-h—a lady.' But no one who knew Milner will believe that matrimony was a state he ever seriously contemplated. At King's it was an ordeal for a young friend to introduce his fiancée. But by the time children were born he was ready with suggested names from mythology or the obscurer hagiography. Sometimes these were accepted: a Lalage and a Rhodope live to bear witness. He did have close woman friends (and not so close devotees). He got them to help in his designs, whether for the side-chapels at King's or the crypt at York. But with the best will in the world he would sometimes fail to recognize women he was supposed to know, and then there was heart-burning. For his nieces he had a great affection; and there was the abiding attachment to his mother.

The call to York came in 1941. Where else could he have gone after twenty-three years as Dean of King's and not found the building, the windows and the choir an anti-climax? He seemed destined for the post. He had turned down the Deanery of Salisbury a few years before after much heart-searching, and it was now an agonizing wrench, but he knew he was right to go.

The first three years were full of anxiety and frustration. The Minster was in continual danger from bombs, and its windows, nearly one third of all the medieval glass in Britain, were hidden away. Almost every day brought news of some young friend killed or some loved work of art destroyed. But many friends in the forces had to pass through York to their postings and these he was able to welcome. He could also co-operate with Sir Edward Bairstow in maintaining the high standard of the music, and devote himself to the Song School, where he came to know every boy, easily transferring the interest he had learnt to take in the Choir School at King's. He badly wanted to furnish the Crypt, the most ancient and historic part of the building, but worthy fabrics were then unobtainable. A chance remark of his mother's gave him an idea. Were there none of the great ball-dresses of the Victorian age stored away in Yorkshire? He approached likely old ladies and wheedled their treasures out of them. At least two of the frontals in the Crypt were made up from long-cherished ball dresses. Then he set the ladies to work embroidering hassocks.

The Minster finances were precarious. Many of the investments had been held for years regardless of the market, and they now depreciated rapidly just when costs and wages were rising

steeply. Milner took the situation in hand. Often he was naughty and acted on his own responsibility, causing both anxiety and irritation; but the Chapter saw with some astonishment its capital rising from year to year; and when major repairs to the fabric were necessary, £250,000 was raised by appeal. But Milner's scheming, which had been a joke at King's, was less so when he had wider power. He was a great outwitter and circumventor, serenely convinced that his way was best; and not unnaturally he made some enemies, though he himself (easily, perhaps, since he generally won) remained without rancour. 'I fear', he once sighed, 'I have a somewhat devious mind.' For those who knew him at King's it is strange to learn there were some at York who found him formidable. On balance, however, there can be no doubt that the Minster profited greatly.

Meanwhile there was the herculean task of replacing the Minster windows, which had been badly patched and jumbled in the course of time, so that in some cases the picture was unintelligible. Milner persuaded the Chapter to allow him to try his hand at restoration, despite the delays that would be involved. He decided to use the existing staff of glaziers and develop that. His aim was to recapture the feeling of the original

craftsmen, whose desire was simultaneously to beautify and to teach. Every morning he and his experts spent some time at his gigantic jig-saw puzzle. The money was found somehow, latterly from the Pilgrim Trust. When he had finished the difference was striking. He was awarded the C.B.E. for this work, and made an honorary member of the Worshipful Company of Glaziers, with the Freedom of the City of London. Nor did his activity cease there: ancient glass was gathered in from derelict churches in York; and he began transferring to the Chapter House windows ancient glass from parts of the Minster in which it could not ordinarily be seen.

It must not be concealed, however, that there is a body of scholarly opinion which strongly disapproves of what he did. Beginning by acting on the careful and conservative principles that had guided M. R. James, he had soon become adventurous, so that as a record of medieval costume and armour, and even of artistic style, these windows are no longer trustworthy. They have been 'Viollated', as the French say. Whether the gain to the casual visitor is sufficient compensation will remain a matter of individual opinion. That there was such gain is incontestable.

Milner also employed artists to re-colour some of the ancient tombs. His mother presented choir

stalls for the nave, made by his friend, Sir Albert Richardson, whom he got appointed as consultant architect, and Sir Ninian Comper made a pulpit for the nave. To embellish the lectern the Dean secured what had been the Lord Mayor's carriage lamps in the eighteenth century. Regiments were encouraged to adorn their chapels in the transepts and the R.A.F. gave a great astronomical clock. As Chairman of the Friends of York Minster he produced annual reports which were admirably written, printed and illustrated; and throughout these years he was an inspiration to the vergers, Minster police, stonemasons and craftsmen. All this activity (which again aroused some opposition) gave rise to a myth of Milner arriving in heaven and looking round with the words, 'Ah, very beautiful indeed. —But much remains to be done.'

In the City he soon became an active figure and highly respected, not least for his fearless conduct in air raids. He was a founder member and joint honorary secretary of the York Civic Trust. A shopkeeper with a new front or a publican with a new inn-sign would be astonished to receive a letter or a visit from the Dean to congratulate him on its design or colouring. He was also a member of the Board of the Festival Society, of the Merchant Adventurers, and of the Art Gallery

Committee—in fact the first citizen of York after the Lord Mayor.

Last, but not least, there was his interest in education. He was *ex officio* Chairman of the Governors of St Peter's and Archbishop Holgate's Schools, and of the York College for Girls. As Provost (from 1945) of the Northern Division of the Woodard Corporation he played a leading part, when over seventy, in a great venture. They bought from its private owner-headmaster Tynemouth School in Northumberland, secured neighbouring houses and grounds, built new buildings (including, at his expense, the 'Provost's Gate'), and raised the numbers to 560. A former exhibitioner of King's who had been a vicar of an important parish near by, Malcolm Nicholson, was translated to the headmastership from the Archdeaconry of Doncaster, and the name subsequently changed to The King's School, Tynemouth (allegedly after some shadowy king of Northumbria buried in the Priory there). Very soon two of its head boys were undergraduates in King's. The unflagging interest he took in this venture has been suitably commemorated by the establishment of two annual Eric Milner-White Scholarships at the school.

Already in 1947 Milner had been a founder member of the York Academic Development

Committee, formed to explore the possibility of having a university there. Hard as they worked, for years it seemed beyond the horizon. Great was the joy, therefore, when the recent policy of expansion found their plans sufficiently developed for them to take their place after Norwich in the front of the queue. One particularly vital piece of the site, secured by Milner's diplomacy, bears for posterity the name of Dean's Acre. During his last days, in the Pisgah of his bedroom, he was able to compose the form of service for the inauguration ceremony a few months later of the university in which he knew he was not destined himself to set foot. He was clear that for this occasion what was appropriate was a modern idiom reflecting the actual conditions of society.

The decline in his health had begun about 1957. An incident of that year well illustrates three sides of his character. After several hours at the Chelsea Flower Show he could not find a bus. He was shy of telephones, thought taxis an extravagance, and never lacked courage; so he walked the whole way to his club, where he arrived exhausted. From now on he began to let slip what did not interest him. He also began to discipline himself, and smooth the path of his executors, by arranging for the disposal of possessions he feared to love too dearly. An opera-

tion in 1961 for cancer proved only temporarily successful, and last Good Friday he appeared for the last time in the Minster.

At his Requiem, which followed the form he had himself drawn up for Lord Halifax, three Kingsmen officiated. The procession of clergy, including both Archbishops, wound far round the vast nave, which was packed with people. In that Victorian 'Book of Confessions' he had written sixty years ago under 'Noblest Aim' the words 'To do what would make me remembered and loved in the remembrance'. Though Milner was a controversial figure both for his personality and his actions, there is a cloud of witnesses who would say that for them at least his 'noblest aim' was achieved.