

Frank, although not clever, was conscientious and hardworking. Mr Bennett had decided—I think before the family left Sydney—that Frank was to be a doctor. Frank was squeamish about blood and would go out of the room if anyone cut a finger; he resisted the idea of a medical career. Mr Bennett pressed on with his arguments. Occasionally he wrote that he did not want to force Frank but he appears to be doing precisely that. The plan was to leave Frank behind to study medicine when the family returned. Although Sydney University had a medical faculty dating from 1856, no medical courses for students were yet available.

If Frank refused to become a doctor, and with other professions mentally reserved for Alf and Wal, Mr Bennett was afraid that Frank might have to be put to a trade, to be a cabinet-maker or a sugar-refiner. 'Everything is so completely overdone over here', he complained of Australia. 'Swarms of lawyers Architects bank clerks it is impossible to get a lad in anywhere. Trades are the only thing'. But in general it was the professions that Mr Bennett went over and over, though he usually drew the line at lawyers, 'a profession of tricks'.

The next boy, Alf, was considered the weakest in intellect, health and character ('like my unfortunate brother George', said Mr Bennett). Mr Bennett had a solution. 'Alfy I think should be with me and stick to Govt he I think will not be very bright & that is the best line for him'. Part of the point of this was that his father could look after him.

Towards the end of their stay, Alf broke his arm, which Mr Bennett characteristically treated as a major calamity which might blight his career. He began to search for other possibilities, writing, 'I think we must bring him up at the University' (he sometimes wrote as though Alf were half-witted) and 'he is very Quiet do you think he would like the church?'

The third boy, Wal, was the brightest of the three, a lively and likeable child. Wal wanted to be a squatter—so did Frank—but Mr Bennett could not consider this because of lack of capital. He reviewed various careers for Wal, including being a chemist and making up prescriptions for Frank. Or Wal might go into a merchant's office in Sydney or farm in Queensland with Mrs Bennett's brother. He could even be a doctor if Frank could not be driven to it. 'I should like to have one boy a doctor', Mr Bennett admitted. Doctors at this time were far from being the godlike beings they later turned themselves into. I suspect that what attracted Mr Bennett was that developments in anaesthetics and antiseptic surgery in the middle of the nineteenth century made medicine appear modern, scientific, progressive. Another attraction may have been that medicine, unlike most of the professions at the time, had already developed a definite career structure.

Mr Bennett did not apparently consider his own profession, engineering, for his sons, unless we count his taking the least capable