

of them, Alf, into his own office so that he could be looked after. A strictly honest man himself (and rather a touchy one), Mr Bennett loathed the involvement with politicians which his work brought.

It was decided that Wal should have a career in the navy. Wal was content and Mr Bennett asked the Governor of New South Wales to nominate him for a cadetship. After nomination, he would have to go for an interview and sit an examination in competition with four other boys. Mr Bennett knew the arrangements well in advance and laid down guidelines. Wal was to be 'brisk and smart in manner without being saucy'. Mrs Bennett must have him 'neatly and plainly dressed, not too young looking no colour except grey with a little dark coat and round hat or cap with short hair & very clean hands and nails'. Meanwhile Wal must prepare for his naval career with plenty of dictation and to steady his nerves he must practise climbing the towers of the Crystal Palace, and if the captain would permit, the rigging of the *Parramatta* when she was next in port.

These instructions about climbing — which were never carried out — were given after the family had moved in late 1879 to Dulwich, on the southern outskirts of London. This was done to bring Fan back into the family, with the hope that Dulwich would be better for her than Cheltenham. Fan wore a respirator in the streets and stayed healthy.

The boys were to attend Dulwich College but had first to pass an entrance exam. Wal passed, Frank and Alf failed. They were coached hard by tutors. Frank, aged sixteen now, rose at five or six, swotted all day and was seldom in bed before eleven.⁶ After a few months the two boys passed but then had to face a stiff regime. School was followed by drill sessions, more private coaching and then homework supervised by their mother. Neither parent favoured sport; as Mrs Bennett wrote, 'I do not think any of them should play football, an accident might keep them away from school for a long time'. Athletics were considered undesirable for the same reason.

Their time at Dulwich College overlapped by a few weeks with that of Alexander Turnbull. He was born in the same year as Alf so it is possible they were in the same class.⁷ The letters do not refer to the Turnbills.

The girls attended Dulwich Girls' High School, one of the Girls' Public Day School Trust schools, and seem to have been happy there. Mrs Bennett preferred the headmistress to Miss Beale but did not say why. Mrs Bennett was horrified to discover that her girls might sit next to tradesmen's daughters but came to see that this might have its good side.⁸ She would not allow the girls to accept invitations to other girls' homes on the grounds that she did not know their mothers and did not have time to get to know them.

Living on the edge of London the children were taken to see the