

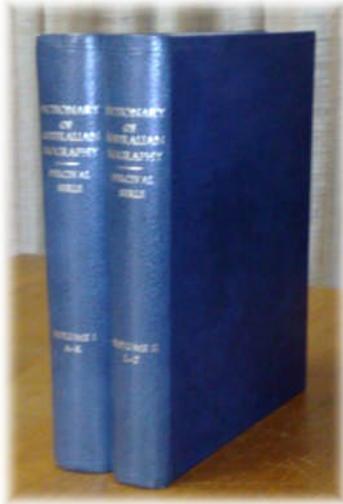


## Dictionary of Australian Biography

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DICTIONARY OF  
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BIOGRAPHY

BY  
PERCIVAL SERLE

*Volume I*



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à **BECKETT**, SIR THOMAS (1836-1919), judge, was born in London on 31 August 1836. His father, Thomas Turner à Beckett (1808-92), brother of Sir William à Beckett (q.v.), was educated at Westminster School. He came to Australia on a visit to his brother, arrived at Melbourne in January 1851, and, deciding to stay, practised as a solicitor. He was nominated to the legislative council in 1852, and after responsible government came in was elected for the Central Province in 1858. He held this seat for 20 years, was a minister without portfolio in the Heales (q.v.) ministry from November 1860 to November 1861, and commissioner of trades and customs from April 1870 to June 1871 in the third McCulloch (q.v.) ministry. He was the author of several pamphlets on legal and other subjects, and was registrar of the diocese of Melbourne from 1854 to 1887, a member of the council of the university, and a trustee of the public library.

His eldest son, Thomas, came to Australia with his father in 1851, returned to London in 1856, and entered as a student at Lincoln's Inn. He won a studentship and was called to the bar in November 1859. Returning to Victoria in 1860 he quickly established a practice, specializing in equity. He was lecturer in the law of procedure for several years at the university of Melbourne from 1874 onwards, and had been leader of the equity bar for some time when he was appointed a supreme court judge in September 1886. He was just 50 years of age and did not retire until 31 July 1917, nearly 31 years later. In 1916 the bar of Victoria presented his portrait by Max Meldrum to the supreme court library,

and the opportunity was taken to express the affection in which à Beckett was held. He died at Melbourne on 21 June 1919. He married in 1875 Isabella, daughter of Sir Archibald Michie (q.v.), who survived him with two sons and three daughters. He was knighted in 1909. A younger brother, Edward à Beckett (1844-1932), was a portrait painter. Examples of his work are at the supreme court, Melbourne.

à Beckett was an active man and continued to play tennis until an advanced age. Like other members of his family he had a keen sense of humour, and many stories are told of him and his sayings, both on and off the bench. He was very popular with the bar, though counsel did not always appreciate his direct methods, which were aimed at preventing the unnecessary prolongation of cases. Occasionally he would deliver what he called an "interim judgment" when he considered one party had a hopeless case. Though good-tempered, obliging and courteous, he could be called a strong judge, and he was never afraid to dissent from his colleagues in the full court. It was found that no judge of the period had his decisions less often upset by the high court or the privy council, and he ranks as one of the finest equity judges Australia has known.

*The Age*, Melbourne, 23 June 1919; *The Argus*, Melbourne, 23 June 1919; P. Mennell, *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography*; *Burke's Colonial Gentry*, 1891.

à **BECKETT**, SIR WILLIAM (1806-1869), first chief justice of Victoria, son of William à Beckett and brother of Gilbert A. à Beckett of *Punch*, was born in London on 28 July 1806, and educated at

Westminster School. He was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1829 and for some years was much engaged in literary work. He was responsible for *A Universal Biography*, a substantial work in three large volumes, published about 1835, which, however, seems to be largely based on previous compilations. He also wrote many of the biographies in *The Georgian Era*, published in four volumes in 1832-4. He went to New South Wales in 1837, in March 1841 was appointed acting solicitor-general, and in March 1843 solicitor-general. He became an acting-judge in July 1844, in 1846 was appointed a judge of the supreme court at Port Phillip, and in January 1851 chief justice of the newly formed colony of Victoria. His health had not been good for many years, and he retired on this account early in 1857. He returned to England in 1863 and died at London on 27 June 1869. He was knighted in 1851. He was married twice and was survived by four sons by the first marriage. His eldest son, W. A. C. à Beckett, was a member of the legislative council of Victoria from 1868 to 1876. In addition to the works already mentioned à Beckett published a youthful volume of verse, *The Siege of Dumbarton Castle*, in 1824, *The Magistrates' Manual for the Colony of Victoria* (1852), *Out of Harness, an account of a tour on the Continent* (1854), *The Earl's Choice and other Poems* (1863).

à Beckett was a man of culture and refinement and an excellent judge, who, in spite of his delicate health, carried out his duties with ability.

*The Times*, 1 July 1869; P. Mennell, *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography; Historical Records of Australia*, ser. I, vols XXI to XXV; *British Museum Catalogue; Burke's Colonial Gentry*, 1891.

**ADAMS, ARTHUR HENRY** (1872-1936), poet, novelist and journalist, son of C. W. Adams, chief surveyor and commissioner of crown lands, Otago, New Zealand, was born at Lawrence, New Zea-

land, on 6 June 1872. He was educated at the Otago high school and Otago university, where he graduated B.A. and began to study law. He, however, abandoned this, took up journalism at Wellington, and began contributing verse to the *Sydney Bulletin*. In 1898 he came to Australia as literary secretary to J. C. Williamson (q.v.), and wrote a pantomime, *The Forty Thieves*, which was produced in Melbourne at the end of that year. In 1899 his *Maoriland and Other Verses* was published at Sydney. In the following year he went to China as representative of a group of New Zealand papers during the Boxer uprising. Invalided home to New Zealand he shortly afterwards went to London and published in 1902 *The Nazarene, A Study of a Man*, written mostly in blank verse, which was followed in 1904 by *Tussock Land*, issued in Unwin's first novel library and reprinted in the same year. *London Streets*, published in 1906, though only a slender volume, contains some of his best verse.

Adams returned to Australia and then went to New Zealand where he was on the *New Zealand Times* for a short period. He came to Australia again and from 1906 to 1909 was editor of the "Red Page" of the *Bulletin*, and was subsequently editor of the *Lone Hand*, and of the *Sydney Sun*. In 1909 he published *The New Chum and other stories*, in 1910 *Galahad Jones* (title page dated 1909), and in 1911 *A Touch of Fantasy* (dated 1912). In 1913 a selection of Adams's shorter poems was published under the title *The Collected Verses of Arthur H. Adams*. This was the last volume of his poems except for a war poem, *My Friend, Remember*, brought out in 1914. Various volumes of fiction appeared at intervals; *The Knight of the Motor Launch* (1913), *Grocer Greatheart* (1915), *The Australians* (1920), and *A Man's Life* (1929). Adams also wrote many plays, but *Three Plays for the Australian Stage* (1914) were the only ones published. The third play in

this volume, *Mrs Pretty and the Premier*, was produced in Melbourne in 1914 and by Arthur Bouchier at His Majesty's Theatre, London, on 31 January 1916. The London production ran for about a month. Adams visited England again in 1928 and after his return confined his work to journalism. He died at Sydney on 4 March 1936. He married in 1908 Lilian Paton, who survived him with one son and two daughters. In addition to the volumes already mentioned Adams published some light fiction under the names "Henry James James" and "James James". These included *Double Bed Dialogues* (1915), English edition *Honeymoon Dialogues* (1916), *Lola of the Chocolates* (1920), and *The Brute* (1922). He also published under the name of "James James" *A Guide Book to Women* (1921), reprinted 1927.

Adams scarcely fulfilled his early promise. He wrote some excellent poetry and is represented in several anthologies; his plays are distinctly above the average, and his novels are quite capable. The constant demands of journalistic work were against his doing himself complete justice, and probably prevented him from reaching his full powers in any one of these departments.

*The Evening Post*, Wellington, 5 March 1936; *Otago Daily Times*, 7 March 1936; *The Argus*, Melbourne, 5 March 1936; *The Telegraph*, Sydney, 5 March 1936; E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature*; personal knowledge.

**ADAMS, FRANCIS WILLIAM LAUDERDALE** (1862-1893), miscellaneous writer, was born at Malta on 27 September 1862. His father, Andrew Leith Adams, then an army surgeon, became afterwards well known as a scientist, a fellow of the Royal Society, and an author of travel books. His mother wrote novels, and his father's father, Francis Adams, was a distinguished classical scholar. Adams was educated at Shrewsbury school and in 1884 published a volume of poems, *Henry and Other Tales*. In the same year he married and went to Australia.

In 1885 *Leicester, An Autobiography* was published in London, and in 1886 *Australian Essays* appeared in Melbourne, where Adams lived for a short period. In these essays we find one on "Melbourne and her Civilization" and another on "Sydney and her Civilization". The first was dated 1884 the second October 1885, and presumably Adams had gone to Sydney in the interim. There he began writing for the *Bulletin* and other Australian publications. He then went to Brisbane, where his wife died, and remained there until the early part of 1887. In this year he published a novel, *Madeline Brown's Murderer*, at Melbourne, and his *Poetical Works* at Brisbane, a quarto volume of over 150 pages printed in double columns. This was followed in 1888 by *Songs of the Army of the Night*, his best known book. After a short stay at Sydney Adams married again, returned to Brisbane, and remained there until about the end of 1889 writing leaders for the *Brisbane Courier*. He then returned to England and published two novels, *John Webb's End, a Story of Bush Life* (1891), and *The Melbournians* (1892). A volume of short stories, *Australian Life*, came out a year later. His health was failing rapidly and he was obliged to spend his last two winters in the south of France and in Egypt. After his return to England, realizing he had no hope of recovery, he shot himself on 4 September 1893. He left a widow but had no children. He had nearly completed another volume, *The New Egypt*, which was published at the end of 1893. His early novel, *Leicester*, had been largely rewritten towards the close of his life, and it was republished in 1894 as *A Child of the Age*. The original book was called "an autobiography" but in a prefatory note to the new edition Adams said:—"Beware of taking my characters for myself . . . even when I wrote *Leicester* I wrote of one entirely unlike myself." *Tiberius: a Drama*, which has been highly praised, was also published in this year. A collec-

## McMahon

ings for the *Picturesque Atlas* are at the Mitchell library, Sydney.

Mrs Macleod, *Macleod of the Bulletin; The Lone Hand*, 1907 and 1908; *The Bulletin*, 26 June 1929.

**McMAHON, GREGAN** (1874-1941), actor and theatrical producer, the eldest son of John Turner McMahon and his wife, Elizabeth Gregan, was born at Sydney on 2 March 1874. His father was in the civil service, and both parents were Irish. Educated at Sydney Grammar School and St Ignatius College, Riverview, Sydney, McMahon played in the Riverview football team, and took first-class honours in classics at his matriculation examination. Going on to the university, Sydney, he graduated B.A. in 1896 and during his course established a reputation as an amateur actor. A critic on one occasion spoke of his performance being so artistic that he seemed like a professional in a company of amateurs. At the conclusion of his university course McMahon was articled to a firm of solicitors at Sydney, and remained with them for some years, but in May 1900 was invited by Robert Brough to join his comedy company. His first professional appearance was as the waiter in *The Liars* at Brisbane in the beginning of June, and during the next 12 months he toured in the east playing a variety of small parts. Returning to Australia he played with the W. F. Hawtreay and Brough companies, and by 1902 was receiving important parts, his Horace Parker, in *A Message from Mars*, was highly praised in this year. Seasons followed in New Zealand and Australia, largely in companies under the J. C. Williamson (q.v.) management. Early in 1911 McMahon, who had been playing in Melbourne, organized a repertory theatre movement. The first performances took place in June, the plays selected being St John Hankin's *The Two Mr Wetherbys*, the second act of Sheridan's *The Critic*, and Ibsen's *John*

## McMahon

*Gabriel Borkman*. It was soon realized that McMahon was a producer with a wide knowledge of his craft, able to get the best out of his cast. Though mostly amateurs, under his direction they were quick in learning the finer points, and in most cases gave performances of great distinction. Among the plays produced during the next six years were *Candida*, *Getting Married*, *Major Barbara*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Man and Superman*, *Fanny's First Play*, *You Never Can Tell* and *Pygmalion* by Shaw; *Rosmersholm* and *An Enemy of the People* by Ibsen; *The Voysey Inheritance* and *The Madras House* by Granville Barker; *The Pigeon*, *Strife* and *The Fugitive* by Galsworthy; *The Seagull* by Tchekhov; *The Mate* by Schnitzler, many other plays by leading dramatists of the period, and several by Australian authors. The 1914-18 war, however, made difficulties, several leading actors enlisted, and by 1918 the public was giving distinctly less support to the movement which had to be abandoned for a period.

McMahon then returned to the professional stage and acted as producer for Williamson and other managers. In 1920 he arranged with the Messrs Tait to start a repertory movement in Sydney. This was carried on for several years, the productions including *The Dover Road* by Milne; *Abraham Lincoln* by Drinkwater; Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*; Franz Molnar's *Liliom*; Galsworthy's *Foundations*, *Loyalties*, and *Windows*; and many others. Back in Melbourne again in 1929 McMahon revived the repertory movement under the name of the "Gregan McMahon Players" and in 11 years placed about 90 plays on the stage, including several of the later Shaw plays; Pirandello's *Right You Are* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; several plays by James Bridie; and others by Galsworthy, Drinkwater, Somerset Maugham, Chesterton, Eugene O'Neill, Sean O'Casey, Daviot and Casella, in the presentation of which a generally high standard was reached. In spite of

South Australian government in 1927 to advise on the state finances. Again in 1930 he was chairman of the advisory committee to advise in connexion with the depression. For 15 months he was indefatigable in supplying facts and advice, working many nights in the week and at week-ends without thought of reward. He was able to resign in 1932 having recommended that South Australia should fall in with the "premiers' plan". He was a director of various companies, a member of the council of the university of Adelaide from 1924, and was chairman of the South Australian branch of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. He died at Adelaide on 5 January 1940. He was created C.B.E. in 1918 and K.B.E. in 1932. He was unmarried.

A quiet, modest, kindly man much interested in his garden and in books, and never seeking notice, Young did great work for his state and Australia. His devotion to the public good lifted him far above party politics, and during the difficult times arising out of the 1914-18 war and the world-wide depression which began some 10 years later, his country owed much to his knowledge and his wise and far-seeing mind. A brother, Sir Frederick William Young, born in 1876, was in the South Australian house of assembly for eight years and held office, was agent-general for South Australia in 1915-18, and a member of the house of commons, 1918-22.

*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 6 January 1940; *Debrett's Peerage*, etc., 1938; *Who's Who*, 1941.

**YOUNG, WILLIAM BLAMIRE** (1862-1935), artist, always known as Blamire Young, was born at Londesborough, Yorkshire, in 1862, the second son of a family of 12. His father, Colonel Young, came of prosperous yeoman stock. Blamire Young was educated at the Forest School, Walthamstow, where he received a classical training, and going on to Cambridge university specialized in

mathematics. That he completed his course with no better than third-class honours was no doubt partly caused by his discovery of the print collection in the Fitzwilliam museum, and his association with the Cambridge Fine Art Society. It had been intended that he should become a clergyman, but Young felt that he had no vocation for that work and obtained the position of mathematical master at Katoomba College, New South Wales. He remained eight years at the college, and was a capable master taking a full part in the life of the school. In his spare time he practised painting, and meeting Phil May (q.v.) received some instruction from him in painting in oil. In 1893 he returned to England and after working for a few months under Herkomer, became associated with James Pryde and William Nicholson in poster work. In 1895 Young returned to Australia and with the Lindsay brothers and Harry Weston did some excellent posters. But the field was limited and many years of poverty followed, during which a certain amount of writing was done for the press. He began exhibiting at the Victorian Artists' Society, but sales were few and the one-man show was then unknown. During his visit to England he had married Mabel Sawyer, an expert wood-carver, and while the lean period lasted Mrs Young helped to keep the house going by executing commissions for Melbourne architects. It was not until 1911 that the appreciation of Young's art really began to be shown. In that year he held an exhibition at Melbourne of small pictures, some of which had similar qualities to the Japanese coloured wood-cuts of the eighteenth century. Sales were good, partly because the prices were low, and the artist was sufficiently encouraged to hold an exhibition at Adelaide. This was both an artistic and a financial success, other shows followed in Melbourne and Sydney, and at last, in his fiftieth year, Young's reputation as an artist was established. In 1912

he sailed for Europe and after a stay in Spain settled in England. Eighteen months later in August 1914 his first show opened at the Bailey galleries. All the arrangements had been made and the pictures hung when war broke out. Young had been a good marksman in his youth, and for three years worked as an instructor in musketry and machine-gunnery at a salary of 18s. a week. Immediately after the war he took up his painting again and exhibited at the Academy and the Royal Society of British Artists. Back in Australia in 1923 Young established himself at Montrose in the hills about 20 miles east of Melbourne. He acted as art critic for the *Herald* and held occasional one-man shows. His position was now secure, and he was recognized everywhere as one of the leading artists in water-colour in Australia. He died at Montrose on 14 January 1935 and was survived by his wife and two daughters. He is represented in the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Geelong galleries. In addition to his newspaper writings he published a one-act play *The Children's Bread* in 1912, and in 1923 *The Proverbs of Goya*, an interesting attempt to disclose the inner meaning of Goya's series of etchings known as the "Desparates". Another one-act play, *Art for Arts Sake*, was produced at the Melbourne Repertory Theatre in 1911.

Blamire Young was 6 feet 3 inches in height, well-built, distinguished and courteous. His quiet meditative manner disguised a humorous and witty character only to be fully appreciated by his intimate friends. He would not take part in any art movement though he condemned none. His work was based on nature, but it was nature seen through a temperament, and he believed that an artist should always be creating something. His composition is good, he had a beautiful sense of pattern and his colour is excellent. His drawing is not always faultless but as a rule he draws firmly enough. He had a

vision of beauty, and was able to express it in his own way. It would be a mistake to assume it was an easy way for he was always experimenting and had his share of failures. But he felt that "art is emotional, not precise; a joy, a refuge, a compensation".

*Art in Australia*, 1921; J. F. Bruce, *The Art of Blamire Young*; *The Argus*, 15 and 19 January 1935; R. H. Croll, Preface to Catalogue, 1935; personal knowledge.

**ZEAL**, SIR WILLIAM AUSTIN (1830-1912), politician, son of Thomas Zeal, was born at Westbury, Wiltshire, England, on 5 December 1830. He was educated privately, obtained his diploma as a surveyor and engineer, and came to Melbourne in 1852. He was employed as an engineer in charge of railway construction by private contractors and was in the government service for some years. He was elected a member of the legislative assembly for Castlemaine in 1864, but, having joined forces with Sir William Mitchell (q.v.) in a station in the Riverina, resigned his seat in 1866. Drought conditions caused Zeal to resume his practice as an engineer in 1869, and in the following year he was again elected for Castlemaine, but pressure of business caused him to resign again. In 1882 he entered the legislative council as a representative of the North Central Province, and in April 1892 he became postmaster-general in the Shiels (q.v.) ministry. He resigned in November and was elected president of the legislative council. He was re-elected to this position in 1894, 1897 and 1900. He was one of the representatives of Victoria at the 1897 federal convention and at the first federal election in 1901 he was elected as one of the Victorian senators. He was elected again in 1903, but would not stand in 1906 as he was then in his seventy-sixth year. He was a

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director of several of the leading financial companies and he retained his interest in these until his death, following an operation, on 11 March 1912. He was created K.C.M.G. in 1895. He never married.

Zeal's shrewdness and honesty made him a valuable member of parliament. He was a persistent critic of the legislation brought forward, and though he had a fiery and peppery style of speaking he was accepted as a man not afraid to say what he thought and was generally popular. He whole-heartedly opposed the "Octopus" railway bill which was before parliament in 1889-90, and seems to have been one of the few men of the period who realized that the undue optimism of the time was leading to disaster. He was a thoroughly capable president of the legislative council.

*The Age and The Argus*, Melbourne, 12 March 1912; *The Cyclopedia of Victoria*, 1903; *Burke's Peerage*, etc., 1911.

**ZELMAN**, ALBERTO (1874-1927), musician, was born at Melbourne on 15 November 1874. His father, Alberto Zelman, the elder, was born at Trieste, Austria, in 1832 of Italian parents. He was educated as a musician and made his mark as a conductor in Northern Italy. He then went to Calcutta, India, where he was successful for some years as a teacher and conductor, and about 1870 came to Australia as conductor of an opera company. He settled at Melbourne, was much esteemed as a man and as a musician, was for many years conductor of the Melbourne Liedertafel, and was a well-known teacher of the pianoforte. His compositions included orchestral works, masses and many solos for the violin. He died at Melbourne on 27 December 1907 leaving a widow and four sons. Of his sons, Alberto also

## Zelman

took up music. He was educated at King's College, Melbourne, and showed early talent as a violinist, afterwards becoming a teacher of the violin. He was connected with the Melbourne Philharmonic Society for over 30 years, first as leader of the second violins in the orchestra, and from 1912 as conductor. He was leader of the British Musical Society's quartet, and after the death of Marshall Hall (q.v.) founded and conducted the Melbourne symphony orchestra. Considering that this orchestra had no endowment Zelman did remarkable work with it, and he was always hoping that all the musical interests in Melbourne would pool their resources so that his native city should have a permanent, properly supported orchestra. In 1922 he visited Europe, and at Berlin was invited to conduct the Berlin philharmonic orchestra. He was enthusiastically received, and in November of the same year conducted the London symphony orchestra at London, but was less successful than at Berlin. On returning to Australia Zelman resumed his teaching and conducting, and died at Melbourne after a short illness on 3 March 1927. He married Maude Harrington, a well-known singer, who survived him. He had no children. A brother, Victor Zelman, studied painting and became known as a capable painter of landscapes; an example of his work is in the national gallery, Melbourne.

Zelman was a slight, rather wistful looking figure of a man, devoted to music and free from the jealousies not infrequent among musicians. He was kindly and sympathetic, a good violinist and an excellent and enthusiastic conductor. His too early death was a loss to musical culture in Australia.

*The Age*, Melbourne, 30 December 1907, 4 March 1927; *The Argus*, Melbourne, 4, 7, 14 March 1927; personal knowledge.

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