

Patriot, Scholar and Statesman

DALLEY, WILLIAM BEDE (1831-1888), 'patriot, scholar and statesman', was born in George Street, Sydney, on 5 July 1831. On 5 July 1856 he was admitted to the Bar. He spent the first £20 he earned on a dinner that cost £25. Dalley set trends in colonial dress; colourful cravats and button-holes reflected his unique flair and style. By the mid-1860s he was renowned as the most scintillating conversationalist and after-dinner speaker in the colony. At the Bar, Dalley's eloquence and instinctive grace charmed juries, winning him many victories, particularly on the criminal side. In two notable cases, however, he did not succeed. One was his defence in 1864 of the bushranger Frank Gardiner whom he had probably known as a boy, the other in 1868 of H.J. O'Farrell for the shooting of the Duke of Edinburgh. He commanded some of the highest fees taken in criminal matters. Dalley could hold his place with any barrister, not only in advocacy but in legal argument, and at his peak he was briefed in many fields of the law.

In 1872 Dalley strongly supported a petition to the governor to exercise the prerogative of mercy and set Gardiner free. The bushranger's release in 1874 led to the fall of Parkes's government, and on 9 February 1875 Dalley became Attorney-General. In 1876 Dalley declined a Supreme Court judgeship and persuaded Sir William Manning to accept it. He became a QC in 1877. In April 1880 Dalley retired from the Legislative

Council. He was a member of the committee of the Australian Club, vice-president and honorary counsel for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a trustee of the Public Library, and fellow of St. John's College. He was a steward of the Australian Jockey Club, a member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and a member of the Southern Cross Masonic Lodge. He was also a magistrate of the City of Sydney and a fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney. Yielding to his political instinct and his sense of duty and affection for Sir Alexander Stuart Dalley returned to public life on 5 January 1883 as Attorney-General. In 1886 he became Australia's first Privy Councillor. The same year, saddened by Martin's death, he declined the vacant chief justiceship, but prevailed upon Frederick Darley to accept it. He died on 28 October 1888. Buried in Waverley Cemetery, he was mourned throughout the continent as a great Australian patriot. Sir John Robertson quickly organised public meetings and a subscription to erect in Hyde Park a statue of Dalley. It is the work of the sculptor James White and is presumed to have been erected in 1897.



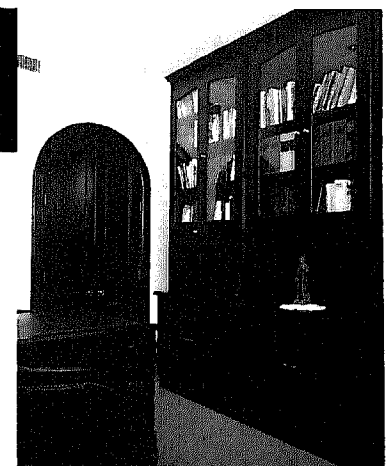
*Who is this old barrister
...and who cares?*

There is a stained-glass window and commemorative plaque in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, and a plaque in St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

"The loveable William Bede Dalley, himself a lover of romance, and in whose company no man could feel dull". □

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