

Tracy, Richard Thomas (1826-1874)

Richard Thomas Tracy (1826-1874), physician, was born on 19 September 1826 at Limerick, Ireland, son of Thomas Tracy, gentleman, and his wife Elizabeth, née Cogan. He began his medical studies in 1845 in the Dublin School of Medicine and in 1848 graduated licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland. In December he was appointed to the Cholera Hospital, Glasgow, and in May 1849 took by examination the M.D., Glasgow, with honours. He practised briefly in King's County, Ireland, and at Reading, Berkshire, England, but becoming uncertain of his future, he decided to migrate and South Australia was chosen on the toss of a coin. On 29 April 1851 he married his cousin Fanny Louisa Sibthorpe and on 16 May they left England in the *Ballangeich*, to which he was surgeon. They reached Melbourne on 20 August and soon sailed for Adelaide.

Tracy began practice in North Adelaide and befriended a schoolteacher James Bonwick. On news of the discovery of gold in Victoria, they formed a small party and left for Melbourne in February 1852. They first went to Forest Creek (Castlemaine) and then to Bendigo and had some success. Quickly tiring of the life, Tracy went back to Adelaide in June but soon returned to Melbourne with his wife and infant daughter. Until 1864 he practised in Fitzroy, becoming its first health officer, a magistrate, and a trustee of St Mark's Church of England. Moving to Collins Street East, he became assistant surgeon to the East Melbourne Corps of Artillery, Victorian Volunteer Force, with the relative rank of lieutenant, captain in 1867.

An original and active member of the Victorian Medical Association, Tracy later joined the rival Medico Chirurgical Society of Victoria, and helped to unite these two bodies as the Medical Society of Victoria, of which he was president in 1860. He was one of the original committee that first published in 1856 the *Australian Medical Journal*.

He was rapidly successful in his practice and with John Maund was medical co-founder in 1856 of the Melbourne Lying-in Hospital and Infirmary for Diseases of Women and Children (later the Royal Women's Hospital), to which he was appointed honorary physician for life. His work was more and more directed to obstetrics and gynaecology, and he became one of the outstanding figures in these specialities in Australia in the nineteenth century.

He was admitted to the University of Melbourne (M.D. *ad eund.*, 1857) and in 1864 was appointed first lecturer in obstetric medicine and diseases of women and children at the university, at a salary of £100 with fees. He performed the first successful ovariectomy in Victoria in 1864 and quickly established an international reputation as a pioneer gynaecological surgeon. In 1871 he was elected an honorary fellow of the Obstetrical Society of London, a very great distinction, and two years later became a fellow of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of London. He visited Britain in 1873 and spent much time in London with the eminent surgeon Thomas Spencer Wells, whom he greatly admired.

Tracy's health, however, was deteriorating and returning to Melbourne in April 1874 he died on 7 November from an abdominal malignancy. He was survived by his wife and six of his seven daughters. He left an estate valued for probate at £24,000, including a valuable collection of books on medical

and general subjects which was auctioned soon after his death. A marble bust of Tracy by Charles Summers is at the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne.

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RICHARD TRACY.