

Moloney, Patrick (1843-1904)

Patrick Moloney (1843-1904), physician and writer, was born in Ireland, son of James Moloney and his wife Catherine, née Kelly. The family migrated to Port Phillip. Educated at St Patrick's College, Patrick entered the University of Melbourne in 1862, one of the three students who began their studies in the new medical school. In 1867 Moloney and William Carey Rees were the first students in Australia to graduate in medicine. In his first year Moloney had also studied arts, winning second-class honours as well as the classics and logic exhibition, but did not complete the arts course. In 1866 he won the Vice-Chancellor's Prize for an English essay and obtained first-class honours in the third and fourth years of the medical course.

In 1868-73 he was resident medical officer at the Melbourne Hospital. He set up in private practice in Lonsdale Street in 1874 and later moved to 106 Collins Street East. In 1875-98 he was honorary physician to the Melbourne Hospital, elected by the subscribers as was the custom before 1910. He was closely associated with the Medical Society of Victoria and its president in 1885. Appointed in 1887 one of the university lecturers in clinical medicine at the hospital, he was also physician to such institutions as the St Vincent de Paul Boys' Orphanage.

Moloney was tall, bearded and handsome with a twinkling eye and a distinct personality. According to a contemporary, 'he was hopeless as a teacher of students, but to his fortunate house physician he was a liberal education'. One autumn day Moloney arrived at the hospital and said 'Do you know what I should like to be doing today? A drive into the country behind a good spanking horse, a good cigar in my mouth, a bottle of whisky under the seat, and that girl in red from the Gaiety by my side'.

John Madden, a fellow student at St Patrick's College, later described Moloney's more serious side: 'His inmost instinct ... was towards poetic gentleness, and abstract philosophy, and, as he grew older, his leisure and recreation were sought in these directions to the exclusion of the more active and material pursuit of his profession ... and in no way was this more displayed than in detecting the philosophy underlying extravagances of human character by the light of humour ... He was gentle and generous always and so free from any egotism that I think the successes of his friends gladdened him more than his own great ones'.

Well known as a popular physician Moloney was even better known as a writer, poet and littérateur. For a time he edited the *Australian Medical Journal* and often contributed to Melbourne *Punch*. Under the pseudonym of 'Australis' in the *Australasian* he wrote many sonnets and verses as well as a series of papers entitled 'Under the Greenwood Tree' but perhaps his best contribution was his *Sonnets: Ad Innuptam*. His verses, often anonymous, appeared in the *Vagabond Annual*, *Hash* (1877) and *Booke of Ye Olde English Fayre* (1881); one of his poems, 'A Matin Song' was set to music by Dr G. W. Torrance. In 1879 he had published in the *Humbug*, and in *An Easter Omelette* presented seventeen of his sonnets, which have appealed to later anthologists of Australian verse. A great conversationalist, he was a friend of such literary lions as Marcus Clarke, whom he attended in his last illness, Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon. They used to meet at Dwight's bookshop near the White Hart to discuss artistic and literary problems. Moloney was elected to the Yorick Club in 1868.

On 11 May 1876 at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, Moloney married Ellen, daughter of James Quirk of Carlton. In 1898 he sailed for England where he spent his last years. He died at Ulverston, Lancashire, on 21 September 1904. His only daughter was married in England to John Boland, M.P. for Kerry and an Oxford graduate who practised at the English Bar.

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