

Medical ethics / [C.O. Woodward].

Contributors

Woodford, C. O.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

[Place of publication not identified] : [s.n] [855]

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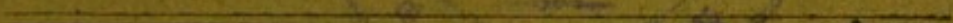
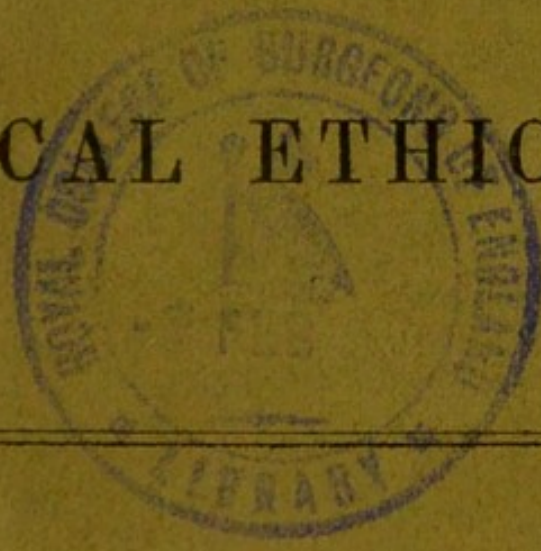
J. Bedford Esq

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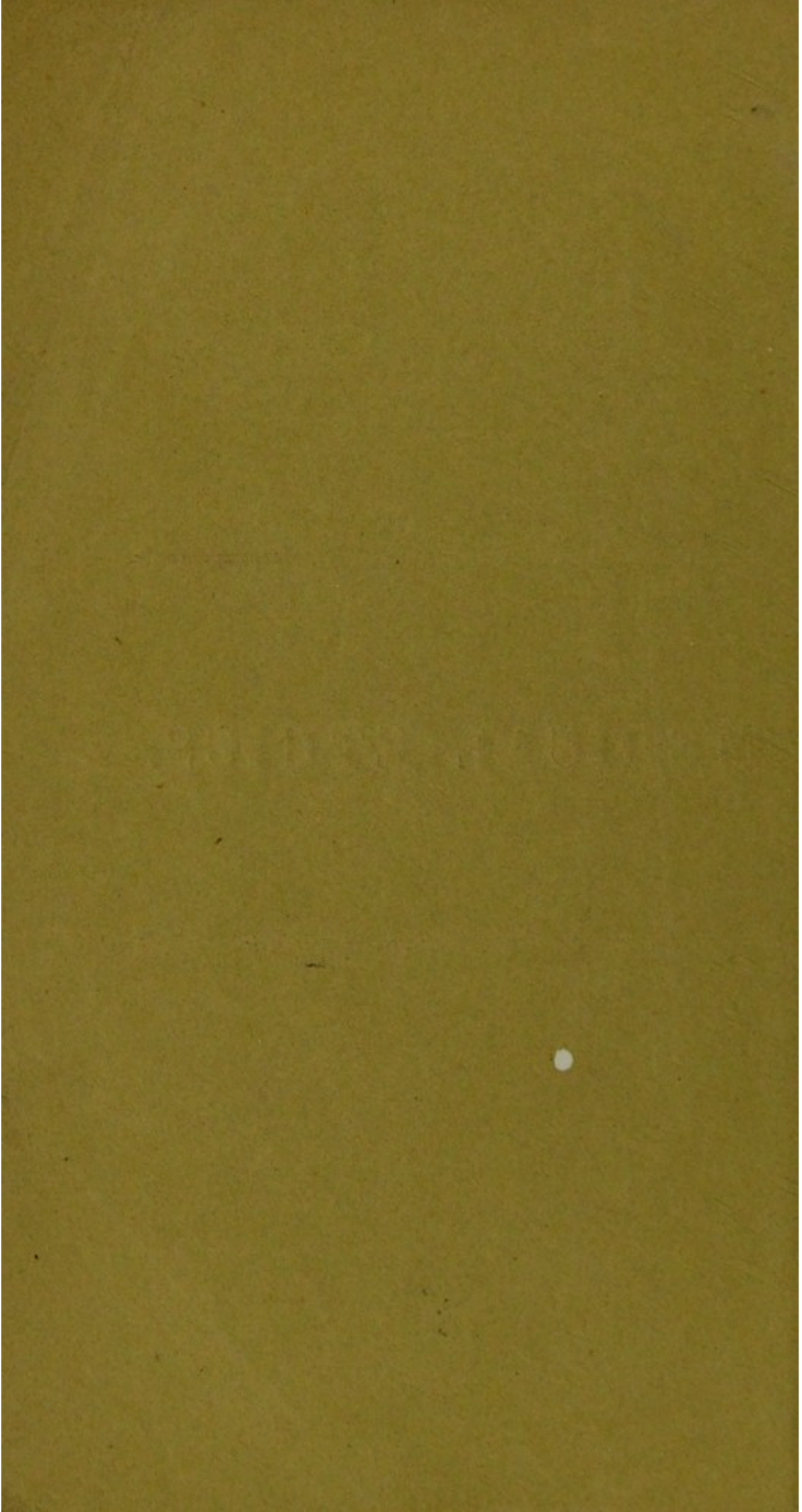


MEDICAL ETHICS.



6

1855



My dear Bedford

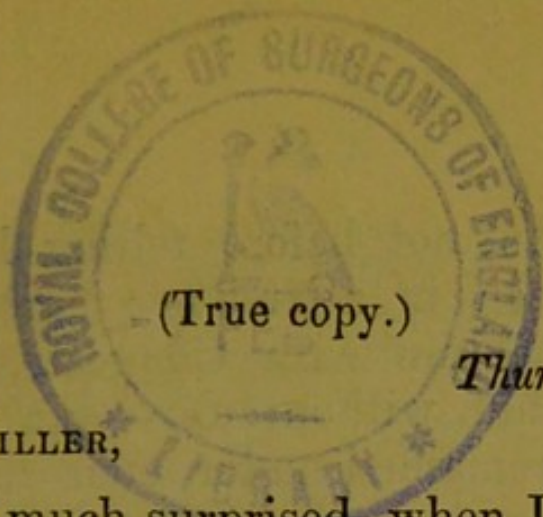
Having once had occasion to write to Mr. Miller, on account of his interference in cases where he was aware that I was in attendance, and for which he apologised. I was much surprised to find, a few days ago, that he had again repeated such an unprofessional act. I wrote to him and mentioned, that I was prepared to place the matter before the Profession. He dared me to prove an unprofessional act on his part. I therefore beg to forward to you the following pages, containing our Correspondence which, I think, speaks for itself, and convicts Mr. Miller of acting in a most unprofessional and uncourteous manner.

I recollect, in 1843, Dr. Duncan Stewart convened a Meeting at the Town Hall, calling to

account the late Dr. R. M. M. Thompson, for similar interference, when the Profession in a body expressed their opinion that such a conduct was most unprofessional. I therefore circulate these pages as more convenient to you than a Meeting.

Believe me
Yours sincerely
C. Woodford

Sept. 4th



(True copy.)

Thursday 16.

DEAR MILLER,

I was much surprised when I called to see my patient, Captain Henderson, this morning, to find you had been to the vessel to see him—it's true Mr. Tilton wrote to me late yesterday evening, saying, he had asked you to visit Captain H., and I am aware you entertain peculiar ideas regarding Professional etiquette, but I would have you distinctly understand that I will not submit to being treated with such indifference. I have written to Mr. Tilton, telling him Captain Henderson had a bilious attack which any *Medical Student* might have been entrusted with—that if such a system of interference became general, why, there would be an end to all Professional *attendance*. That you may better apply the case, What did you think and say when O'Shaughnessy was called in to your patient Mr. Davis?

In the case of Captain Hubbard I did not say a word, as Captain H. told me he did not feel himself recovering *fast*, and wished another Doctor. I therefore left

the case, but not before telling him that I had been in attendance barely three days, found him with Congestive Fever, and left him without any—yet for some *weeks* he remained under your treatment. Where there is a mischievous interference, it is the part of a Medical man to point out to persons ignorant in such matters their *duty*, but when you are ready to step in and take over any case that is not cured within twenty-four hours, without the slightest compunction, of course, these folks will be anxious to have *further advice*.

I need not say, that it is not from pecuniary motives that I act, as under any circumstance, I receive my stipulated fee, but such practice is not Professional.

I have to add, Captain Henderson wishes to remain under the treatment of

Your's faithfully,

(Signed) C. O. WOODFORD,

August 16, 1855.

TO DR. WOODFORD,

DEAR SIR,

I was very much surprized at the receipt of your note which, in self-defence,

I must circulate throughout my American friends, you are at liberty to drag me before the Professional tribunal whenever you choose. I have repeatedly refused to attend in cases when I have been entreated, and where you were previously in attendance, without your consent and knowledge; not one, two or three, but at least twenty this season, and I shall make a very open question of it indeed, since you have more than once declined to meet me in consultation. A short time since, several of the Americans asked me to introduce a Medical man who would undertake their ships, and who would not object to meet me in consultation, because "I was too young." As to Captain Hubbard, who is not yet gone, I shall get in writing from him the categorical course you put him under the other day, wishing to elicit that I had spoken disrespectfully of you to him—you are at perfect liberty to appeal to any tribunal of Medical Ethics you like. I defy any man to prove an act of unprofessional conduct on my part, I have acted wrong in going afloat yesterday, a practice I have eschewed with the greatest aversion, but it was at Mr. Tilton's request, and Mr. Bliss told me that Captain Henderson entreat-

ed of him to bring me. I yielded from a wish to oblige my own connexion, but did not hesitate, as far as a Professional line of conduct is concerned, for they had satisfied me you were made aware of it ; as you have taken the liberty to allude to my patient Mr. Davis, I will tell you what I did, why I made them apologize to me for not making me aware of their wish to see O'Shaughnessy ; if they had not done so, I would never have darkened their door again, and O'Shaughnessy did not call again. It is not my fault that people should send to me when they get alarmed —if they are your patients, and become alarmed, it is surely your place to find fault with them, and not with me. I am not going to break with a valuable circle of Americans who have become my patients, because it hurts your feelings that I am called in. Ask any of them you like, I care not which it is, and I will bring them before the tribunal you speak of, and they shall declare what I have said and done ; whenever they have wanted me, I have told them, only in consultation with Dr. Woodford can I come, you decline this. I am made aware of the fact, and what course is left me if they persist in

my seeing the patient—why, that they must give you your conjee—it is you who have driven me into this position, and I am quite prepared to prove it, and as long as you persist in refusing to meet me, I dare you to prove an unprofessional fact, or act—if I follow the only course left me by yourself, call the thing by what name you like.

Your's very faithfully,

(Signed) J. W. M. MILLER.

August 16, 1855.

(True copy.)

Calcutta, August 17, 1855.

To J. M. MILLER, Esq.,

DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter of yesterday's date, I have to inform you that I have *never once* been asked to have you meet me in consultation, neither have I asserted that any objection would arise on my part, "because you were too young," but I have said that I should object to meet you in consultation—not from any ill-feeling, but simply, because if consultation were

required, I should wish to meet a Medical man supposed to be of longer experience than myself, which, with all due deference should I meet you, would not be the case. I have required but one consultation this year amongst my American friends, and in which I called Dr. Vos.

You say you have refused at least twenty times this season, without my consent and knowledge, to attend cases when I was in attendance. Why did you not refuse in this instance of Captain Henderson? No!—but you say he will be ill for a month, order him to a boarding house, and are ready to take over the case, rather than “break with a very valuable circle of American friends, who have become your patients, because it hurts my feelings that you are called in.” You defy me to prove an unprofessional act—keeping to the case in question, can you assert that your motives were disinterested and Professional? I have known and attended hundreds of American patients during the past thirteen years, and know them to be too right-minded and straight-forward to have been offended, had you positively refused to interfere without my consent—not in twenty but in every case. I have

to tell you that my patients have every confidence in me—it may be true that you have been asked by some recently arrived Americans living at the respective boarding houses, to visit them, and that you have refused, because I have been in attendance. Why then did you not refuse in this case?

As to Captain Henderson entreating *that you should be brought*, he was not aware that there was such a person in Calcutta. I believe that it was Mr. Tilton who told Captain H. that he would send you—you visited him about 3 P. M. on board, and I received Mr. Tilton's note at 8 P. M., saying he had asked you to call. You may in this manner have been asked, as you say twenty times this season, it neither proves that you are right, or that my patients are wanting in confidence, but rather that your friends are anxious to press you forward. I said in my last letter, and repeat it, that if they are unacquainted with the etiquette of the Profession, you cannot plead the same excuse, although you may choose to disregard it.

Regarding the categorical questions, you state, as put by me to Captain Hubbard, arose from an American gentleman,

a very old friend of mine informing me, "that there was a person endeavouring to cause disaffection towards me, but that I had too many friends amongst them to fear any such influence, and that it had been stated that I had treated Captain H. for a wrong complaint"—from your former unprofessional conduct on more than one occasion, it occurred to me that you might have said so. Without any desire to elicit that you had spoken disrespectfully of me, I considered it the most honest plan to enquire if such had been said, and without beating about the bush, I called upon Captain Hubbard and asked him if *you* had made the remark, purposing, if you had, to tell you of it, but he assured me you had not. I am not aware of having put another question, but I believe I said, "Well, you did not after all get well *fast.*"

Your's faithfully,

(Signed)

C. O. WOODFORD.

August 1, 1855, No. 1, Kyd-street.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter of yesterday, I beg to say that it is easy to attack and rail at a man with broad assertions, but it is

not so easy to prove them—as you have not hesitated to denounce me as an unprofessional man, and speak of my known and former unprofessional conduct, I call on you as an honorable person to appeal to a jury of our own Profession, and prove before them the aspersions which you have cast on me so lavishly and in such uncourteous terms, for I intend to close this Correspondence finally with you, and although you do not merit it, still I think it but fair to give you as nearly I can a *verbatim* account of the conversation which took place between Mr. Bliss, on the part of Messrs. Tilton and Atkinson, and myself, previous to the visit I paid to the Captain of the *Tranquebar*. About 4 P. M. Mr. Bliss called on me, on Wednesday, to request and entreat of me as a particular favor to their firm, to waive my rule of not visiting on the river, and to see the Captain of the *Tranquebar*, who was so ill and weak as to alarm them, and they feared to bring him on shore without medical advice. “The Captain,” said Mr. Bliss, “has no medical man. Dr. Woodford solicited the care of the ship, which was refused him on her arrival. A few days ago, when the Captain was taken ill, Dr.

‘ Woodford was seen passing in a boat,
‘ was hailed to come on board ; he came
‘ and prescribed, since when he has never
‘ called again, moreover, the Captain has
‘ no faith in him or his treatment. He will
‘ not see him again ; he has asked us to
‘ call in another Physician. We told him
‘ we should ask you to come until he was
‘ able to be brought on shore, and we have
‘ written to Dr. Woodford to this effect.”

After hearing this, I went on board the *Tranquebar*. I pronounced the Captain well enough to be brought on shore by daylight the next morning ; in the mean time, I prescribed and left the ship. Mr. Bliss having met me at the ghaut, accompanied me on board, and returned with me on shore. When we parted he promised to inform me the next day where the Captain was to be found after he had settled him on shore. This is the case, with witnesses who can prove it. I think I may dread very little the verdict of an impartial jury of my own profession. I again call on you as a man of honor, after having condemned me, to give me an opportunity of verifying my position. I pass by the puerilities you allude to, such as, I said “ he would be ill a month,” or how many days I had another

under treatment, with the contempt that they deserve, and proceed to say, that my belief has been hitherto, whenever or whatever private objections we may have to a brother practitioner, or dislike to him, we are bound to forego them when that practitioner's opinion is wished for, either by the patient or the friend of the patient, and if it is, that, we have no faith in that opinion, we are at liberty to call in a third on whom we may rely, so that the opinions of two to one may guard against any unpleasantness arising. I suppose this is what you sneer at as peculiar and unprofessional on my part, at all events, I shall continue in the belief ; and as long as you prefer to act otherwise, I shall consider that you have intentionally debarred me from a professional right, and when I am asked to attend in cases where you have previously attended (which, judging from the past, will occur frequently) I shall not hesitate to make it a *sinequá non*, that they shall select either you or me separately for the charge of the case—you have the same remedy in your hands against me, which I shall never quarrel with you for using. I have now declared my view as frankly as I can, it is a position

that you have forced me into, you have accused me unjustly, and you have given me evidence of being moved by the spirit which ought to be foreign to our Profession, and I can only repeat my call upon your own honorable feeling, to bring the matter wherein you are grieved, before the Profession, and having such a resource, you cannot fail in eliciting the truth, and with it justice.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your's very truly,

J. W. M. MILLER.

To DR. WOODFORD,

(True copy.)

Calcutta, August 21, 1855.

To J. M. MILLER, Esq.,

DEAR SIR,

In your letter of the 18th instant, you say it is easy for a man to rail against another, &c., &c. I agree with you, it is so, but you have neither *disproved* any assertion I have advanced, or *proved*, that you have not acted unprofessionally,

whereas I have proved *all* that I have advanced in my communications to you.

Your information regarding Captain Henderson and myself is, from beginning to end, *incorrect* and *untrue*. Captain H. *called upon me at my house* about 2 P. M., on the 10th instant, requesting me to see one of his sick people, and until he introduced himself to me, I was not aware who he was, *never having seen him before*. I called again on the 15th, when I found Captain H. unwell—on the following morning I prescribed for him—you visited him in the afternoon, prescribed, knowing that I am already in attendance, and on his arrival at his lodgings, the next morning a written message is left at my house, to the effect that he wishes to see me.* I therefore never was refused attendance. Captain H., who is now well, is ready to corroborate this statement.

I am now about to place this matter before the Profession, to whom I hold it should *alone* have been confided, but as you have informed me of your intention,

* Dr. Woodford will please call on *Captain Henderson* as early as possible, at Mr. Macdonald's, No. 10, Sudder Street.

August 16, 1855.

to place my first communication to you before your American friends, you have compelled me to place the *whole* Correspondence before them also, as you now attempt to justify your conduct, for which, in a similar case, three years ago, on my calling you to account, you apologised.

I am obliged to you for your permission to visit your patients upon the same terms as those on which you do not scruple to visit mine, but neither having the desire or requiring to descend to such unprofessional conduct, I beg to decline such an honor!

Your's faithfully,

(Signed) C. O. WOODFORD.

