

Cuttings from The Yorkshire Herald relating to the controversy, December 1813

Publication/Creation

1813

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/j9w7feer>

License and attribution

You have permission to make copies of this work under a Creative Commons, Attribution, Non-commercial license.

Non-commercial use includes private study, academic research, teaching, and other activities that are not primarily intended for, or directed towards, commercial advantage or private monetary compensation. See the Legal Code for further information.

Image source should be attributed as specified in the full catalogue record. If no source is given the image should be attributed to Wellcome Collection.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

TO THE EDITOR OF THE YORK HERALD.

Sir,

I think it my duty to inform the public, that I have presented the following Statement to the Governors, at the Asylum, this day. I am not at present informed, what is the decision of the Court. I shall therefore make no comments, nor give any opinion upon what has passed, but I do most confidently hope, if the Governors have thought it right to come to any decision; that, at least, the nature of the evidence upon which that decision is founded will be stated to the public. However, I care little what is their conclusion, so that it only produce such wholesome Regulations, (the appointment of Visitors, &c. &c.) as may prevent even the suspicion of such things occurring in future.

I remain, Sir, your humble Servant,

GODFREY HIGGINS.

YORK, Thursday Evening, Dec. 2, 1813.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I think it my duty to lay before you the following statement of certain facts, which came publicly before me as a magistrate, respecting a lunatic of the name of Wm. Vickars. I have done myself the honour of presenting them to you in person, in consequence of a conference I had some time ago at Doncaster with Dr. Best, and of the advertisement published by him, the result of that conference; and also, in order that I may verify the documents as far as in my power, and be ready to afford you any explanation which you may require. The object of this statement, Wm. Vickars, was sent to the Asylum by my orders, against his friends' consent; the evidence respecting him was given publicly in the Town's Hall, at Doncaster, and I think I am bound, in justice to myself, as well as to this poor but respectable and unfortunate man, to show that I will not connive at the injustice with which he appears to me to have been treated; his friends at least shall be satisfied, that if justice be not done to him, the fault is not mine. It has been represented to me, that I ought to have sent the statement first to Dr. Best, before I published it. I think otherwise. But it may be well for those who are of that opinion to recollect that, in consequence of Mr. Peacock's conduct, the doctor had all the opportunity he could require of rendering a satisfactory explanation. He took the opportunity afforded to him, by coming and talking with me at Doncaster, and by giving me a written statement, in defence of the Asylum, marked F. which, to say the least of it, is not satisfactory to me.

At the time I first wrote the statement which I sent to the Courant, marked G, I did not know the name of any person connected with the Asylum: I had never read any of the letters which have lately been published in the York papers respecting it; nor have I to this day read more than three or four of them, and I never have had, until this week, any communication, directly or indirectly, on this subject, with any person in the City of York or its neighbourhood, except Dr. Best and the Editors of the two York papers. I should not have said a word of my own motives or conduct in this affair, had it not been for something like an insinuation contained in Dr. Best's letter marked H, of Nov. 20, that I was lending my name as a magistrate to encourage a malicious conspiracy against him and the Asylum: but I hope and trust no one will believe that I would so far forget myself and the situation I have the honour to hold. No one, surely, will suspect me, of wishing, wantonly, to hurt the feelings of any man, much less of a man like Dr. Best, whom I had never seen, and of whom I had never heard any one speak, but with esteem and respect. He may think it policy to turn the attention of the public to my offences instead of the offences of the Asylum, but I do not think it will avail him much. I cannot think, that in attacking me, he has taken the best method of defending himself.

By Dr. Best's account, the only difference in opinion betwixt him and myself, seems to be, that he wanted a full and complete investigation in private—I wanted one in public. In consequence of the Doc-

tor's journey to Doncaster, I have had a great deal more trouble than I should otherwise have had; but I should have been amply repaid, if my trouble had been ten times as great, by the thanks of numbers, for taking up the cause of their relations and friends. Yet, in several instances, when I have urged them to let me bring forwards their individual case, the answer has been, I can take care my friend shall be ill used no more, but I will not advertise him in all the York papers for a lunatic. I shall now probably be told, I am raising an outcry again—be it so; but what I say is true. I think no one will deny, that the case of Vicars is a very strong one in its present appearance. Having brought it before the public, I have done my duty, and I shall be very glad, if the gentlemen connected with the institution can be able to show that they have done theirs, and to convince the friends of Wm. Vicars and the public, upon unquestionable evidence, that his case has been mistaken; but I apprehend nothing short of the whole evidence being laid before the public will be deemed satisfactory—less than that will not satisfy me. Upon the document marked F, Dr. Best's defence, which he might have published, if he had thought proper, along with mine, I think it right to observe, that it seems to me incredible that any inferior servant of a mad-house should be found so humane as to lend his clothes for six weeks to a lousy and itchy pauper, who, if not lousy and itchy at that time, was so mischievous as, in spite of all restraint, to destroy his own clothes as fast as they were given to him, and for whom the opulent township of Fishlake was bound and willing to find every necessary. I may possibly err in my judgment, but I cannot admit such interested and incredible evidence as the above to stand in competition for a moment with the disinterested and unobtruded evidence of Francis Moot and the two Maples's.

I sought their evidence it was not offered to me.

I think it right to correct a mistake which took place in the copying of my first statement in the Herald; the words, "except Mr. Branson," ought to have been inserted in the tenth line from the bottom, after the word "agree."

I called on Mr. Branson twice on Saturday last, and sent a special messenger over to him on Sunday with a note, to apologize for the mistake, and to inquire whether he recollected any thing more respecting Vickars: he was unfortunately from home, but I received a letter yesterday, to inform me he now recollected that Vickars was sufficiently violent at his house to justify and require a recommendation to the Asylum. I certainly never doubted the man's insanity; I believe Mr. Branson never saw him after his return—Mr. Maples never before his admission.

The cases of Wilson, Schorrey, Kidd and Thirkeld, appear to me to demand your serious attention.

It really surprises me, considering the general difficulty of substantiating particular charges in regard to the treatment of Lunatics and the delicacy which generally exists in exposing the instances of this disease, that I have been able to collect such a mass of important evidence in one day and a half.

There is one other fact, of which no separate document is laid before you, to which I must call your attention. Since the 1st of January last, 23 or 24 persons appear to have been buried at St. Olave's church from the Asylum. You will naturally inquire whether all the patients who die in the Asylum are interred in this place.

Surely, my Lords and Gentlemen, if you dispassionately discuss the circumstances which I have laid before you, you must agree with me that public investigation into the state of the Asylum, of which you are the guardians, is absolutely necessary; and that the institution ought to be placed on such a footing, as, by the purity of its principles, the frankness of its proceedings, the wide extension of its doors to the insane poor, might challenge and command the approbation, the confidence, and the continued patronage of that liberal public to whom it is indebted for its origin and support.

GODFREY HIGGINS.

YORK, December 1, 1813.

To the Editor of the York Herald.

I thought you duty to inform the public, that I have received the following statement from the Hon. Mr. Justice, in relation to the case of the *Queen v. Bland*, which is the subject of the late report in the *York Herald*. I am not at present in a position to state the substance of the statement, but I have the honor to inform you that it is a very important one, and that it will be published in the *York Herald* as soon as it is received. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

COUNTRY NEWS.

York, Thursday Evening, Dec. 4, 1813.

I have the honor to inform you that the following statement has been received from the Hon. Mr. Justice, in relation to the case of the *Queen v. Bland*. The statement is a very important one, and it will be published in the *York Herald* as soon as it is received. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

At the time I had written the statement which I have just received, I had not been informed of the result of the case. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

I have the honor to inform you that the following statement has been received from the Hon. Mr. Justice, in relation to the case of the *Queen v. Bland*. The statement is a very important one, and it will be published in the *York Herald* as soon as it is received. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

I have the honor to inform you that the following statement has been received from the Hon. Mr. Justice, in relation to the case of the *Queen v. Bland*. The statement is a very important one, and it will be published in the *York Herald* as soon as it is received. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

I have the honor to inform you that the following statement has been received from the Hon. Mr. Justice, in relation to the case of the *Queen v. Bland*. The statement is a very important one, and it will be published in the *York Herald* as soon as it is received. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. Bland.

COUNTRY NEWS.

York, Thursday, Dec. 4, 1813.