

ard on for suggesting doubts as to the legality of its constitution or its ability to reform any considerable proportion of the young scamps who troubled the Riding. The comments of other gentlemen on this prompt plan for at least doing something were more encouraging; but the only result of the meeting was the appointment of a committee—not to bring the subject before the Riding and interest its people in the idea of a reformatory, but to look out a suitable site for one. The gentlemen selected for this duty were unexceptionable. Another meeting—still of Magistrates only—was held on April 2nd, 1855, at which this committee reported that it had not succeeded in obtaining a site; and after some not very practical discussion,—apparently under the influence of despondency, a Memorial to the Government was adopted, to the effect that only by placing reformatories upon public funds could they be established on a sufficiently large scale or kept in permanent existence, if once started. All this time, the buildings near Mirfield were in course of adaptation for the experiment of MR. WHEATLEY and his coadjutors; but with this exception, from that day to the present not one attempt has been made, by precept or example, to bring the subject of a West Riding Reformatory fairly before the people of the Riding, to prove the necessity for such an institution, to state the facilities for its establishment, with the measure of permanent support which might be expected from Government, and to inquire of the benevolently disposed what they would do to carry out this humane enactment. The testimony of Prison Governors and Chaplains at Wakefield and Leeds, that the instrumentality in their hands failed in 1855, (as it had done in every previous year,) to reform young criminals, seems to have brought MR. DENISON to the point at which our readers would see he had arrived a fortnight ago, viz.:—that of entertaining “some thoughts” of bringing a bill into Parliament next Session, to authorise the erection of West Riding Reformatories out of the county rates; and we have since published letters from T. H. INGHAM, Esq., and MR. BAKER, of the Doncaster Deaf and Dumb Institution, expressing strong approval of this inchoate intention. Had the Hon. Member acted fifteen months ago as country Magistrates elsewhere did,—had he at that time headed, with his usual energy and decision, and with commensurate liberality, a movement for raising the funds requisite to open a moderate-sized reformatory, which might be added to as success won for it additional public favour by proving it to be the very *desideratum* so long wanted,—we have no doubt that legislative labours like those he now contemplates would have seemed to himself wholly unseasonable and impertinent. But valuable time has been lost for lack of good management, and we are now invited to support a project for summarily repairing the effects of delay by setting aside the existing law as it applies to this county. MR. DENISON solicits remarks on his proposition; and, without troubling the Post-office clerks at Doncaster with any addition to the labour involved in forwarding to the Honourable Gentleman the “thousands of communications” he expects through that medium, we propose, therefore, to state a few reasons, in addition to those implied above, against any special Act for the West Riding. It will, however, be most in accordance with our own precept, if we first ask attention from our readers to the reasons why some new mode of dealing with Juvenile Offenders is imperatively called for. We will state the objects aimed at in reformatory schools elsewhere, with the modes in which their attainment is sought, and the success which has attended past experiments; and lastly, we will endeavour to show why schools established on MR. DENISON’S principle are not nearly so likely as those instituted after the fashion approved by law, to turn juvenile criminals into useful, honest, industrious, and religious citizens.

REFORMATORIES FOR JUVENILE DELINQUENTS.

“THE cry is all for Reformatory Schools,” says the *Times*, and every newspaper reader will agree in the assertion. Yet when facts are looked into, it will be found that until lately this cry proceeded not from the public, but rather from a comparatively few persons, all or nearly all of them connected in some way or other with the administration of justice. It is a remarkable proof of the slowness with which great questions make their way in this country, as well as of the readiness of most men practically to ignore even important matters when others more temporarily urgent solicit their attention, that even now English people generally talk and think little about Reformatory Schools, and rather suppose they must be good things, as the name is so unexceptionable, and Magistrates write so much about them, than join intelligently and unanimously in “the cry” for introducing them into every county, because of their felt necessity and excellence.

PERHAPS this state of things arises chiefly from the manner in which the subject was long dealt with. Popular sympathy can only be enlisted in favour of any object by plain explanations of its nature and advantages, reiterated until they have taken firm hold of the public mind. With respect to Reformatory Schools, until recently their advocates devoted too little time to familiar expositions of the wide difference existing between them and other institutions with titles equally significant of a good purpose—such as “Houses of Correction,” “Penitentiaries,” &c. There were plenty of assurances from all kinds of writers, ranging from the slang novelist to the preacher, that English gaols are often a great sham, oftener still a great failure; and the records of our criminal courts, with which newspaper readers are unhappily so familiar, still countenance this doctrine, by telling of ticket-of-leave men as the terror of whole districts, of offences of the worst kind as becoming more and more frequent, and of committals to prison as falling upon the same individuals—juveniles not less than adults—time after time, and falling absolutely in vain. But with some honourable exceptions, the chief of whom is a lady whose name will some day rank with that of FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE,—we mean MARY CARPENTER—writers have too commonly taken for granted that the causes of this reproach on our criminal administration were understood, and that the peculiar merits of the proposed reformatories were also known. The passing of MR. ADDERLEY’S Act in 1854 gave the subject, for the first time, a practical aspect, and since that period more has been done to interest the people in it than during several years previously, in which it had been discussed mainly in official and other circles. The peculiarity of the Act just named is this—that it presupposes the establishment of Juvenile Reformatories by voluntary agency, and but for that agency would be a dead letter. The benevolent individuals, therefore, at whose instance it was enacted, immediately afterwards undertook to inform their neighbours and fellow-citizens within the sphere of their influence, of the new and effective weapon which the legislature offered for attacking crime at its very source; and in a large number, if not in a majority of English counties, the friends of good morals have already entered upon the conflict. Appeals have been made for aid in the establishment of reformatory schools, and they have been responded to liberally and adequately,—in every case, so far as we know,—where the matter has been made one of obvious public interest.

IN Yorkshire, unfortunately, the usual course has not been pursued, and therefore the usual result has not been attained. We cannot take shame to ourselves for having neglected to explain the value of these institutions: our columns have been open to lengthened reports of lectures on Mettray and similar places, to communications from gentlemen interested in the subject, and to notices of public meetings in other counties to originate the work of reformation there. But we must repeat, what we took the liberty of stating more than a year ago, that the measure adopted to bring MR. ADDERLEY’S Act into operation amidst the large population of the West Riding; were not fitted to call forth, but rather to deaden, sympathy in behalf of that object. The first step taken was a meeting of Magistrates, as such, held at Wakefield on the 15th November, 1854, “to take into consideration the Act recently passed for the better care and reformation of juvenile offenders, with a view to the formation of a Reformatory School or Schools in the West Riding.” Nothing could be more proper than an assemblage, for such a purpose, of the gentlemen whose duties rendered them so familiar with the effects of the then, and alas! the present treatment of young offenders in this great county. But it soon became clear that the matter was considered by almost every body present as demanding action from Magistrates only, and the entire scope of the resolutions was in accordance with this view. Not one of them even hinted at other persons having a share in deliberations which were to set on foot an entirely new system, dependent by the very terms of the Act on voluntary effort and sacrifice for its origination in any part of the country. A modest project of MR. E. B. WHEATLEY’S and a few other Magistrates for erecting a reformatory near Mirfield was criticised not too partially by MR. DENISON, M.P., who begged