

JUVENILE REFORMATORIES FOR THE WEST RIDING.

BEFORE considering a question which comes home to the feelings and interests of the great body of our readers, viz: on what principle and under what conditions should Juvenile Reformatories be established in the West Riding, we deemed it right to prove, by figures as well as arguments, that prison discipline does not, generally speaking, prevent crime coming to maturity in individuals, however young they may be when first brought within prison walls; and next, that in other countries an example of dealing with this subject has been set us, which may be safely and beneficially followed. The enactment of the Youthful Offenders' Act, the provisions of which we specified last Saturday, was a legislative acknowledgment of the value of this example, and a legislative inducement to the imitation of it throughout the United Kingdom. The results of that incentive are most marked. The letter addressed by Mr. DENISON, M.P., on the 10th ult., to the Ratepayers of the West Riding, opens with these words:—"Resolutions have been unanimously passed in several counties in favour of institutions being established for the reformation of juvenile offenders;"—to which the Honourable Gentleman might have added, "on a principle different from that for which I ask your sanction;" and we find from a discussion which took place on Friday in the House of Commons, that "there are at present twenty-five Reformatories in England and Scotland, certified under the last Act, in addition to those established under a previous Act." These are

the words of Sir Geo. GREY, Secretary for the Home Department, to which we may add from private information that upwards of three-fourths of the English counties have already, or will shortly have, within their borders, institutions of this nature. Some counties will not need any, the provision made by their neighbours sufficing for such juvenile criminals as their small population may supply, while others, for an opposite reason—because of the extent of their population—will need an extra supply. Among the latter are the metropolitan counties of Middlesex and Surrey, Lancashire, and the West Riding. The first-named of these great centres of population obtained two years ago a special Act, authorising the erection of a juvenile reformatory in Middlesex, out of the county rates, but to this day difficulties about a site have prevented a single stone being laid, so that we are at a loss to understand the meaning of a passage in Mr. T. H. INGHAM's recent letter in support of Mr. DENISON's project, which runs as follows:—

"I may mention that Middlesex has already obtained the power of establishing these institutions out of the county rates. The increase of juvenile crime in the metropolis forced the adoption of this course, and it is amply affording that abundant success which has uniformly attended Reformatory Schools."

SURREY appears to rely, for the present, on the Institution at Red Hill to meet its pressing wants in this direction. Lancashire, we hear, is likely to move shortly,—indeed, gentlemen of influence and benevolence in both divisions of that county have the matter now under consideration; and the questions then come—what is Yorkshire doing, and what ought Yorkshire to do? Before replying, we will confirm our own statement in reference to the country at large by the authority of a gentleman who was one of the earliest to take up this subject, and whose wide communications give him a knowledge of what has been done beyond that of perhaps any other person. He says:—

"I believe there is not one county in England, which needs a school, where one is not in agitation. Oxford has none, but Berks will soon be able to clear it. Lincolnshire and Derbyshire may want them, but I do not think they will. There is, I believe, no county yet unprovided, which has not some other county which will soon be ready to take its young criminals."

In answer to the inquiry,—what has Yorkshire done? we are happy to refer to one institution as now actually open in the West Riding. This is the Calder Farm School, Mirfield, which is under the superintendence of a Committee having at its head the Hon. E. LASCELLES, M.P.,* and including other gentlemen whose names are a guarantee for good and enlightened management. The management of the boys themselves, for thirty-five of whom provision is made on premises admirably situated and capable of any extension, is confided to a gentleman experienced in the study of character among young criminals,—whose long practical acquaintance with them, combined with his observation of the working of the system at Mettray and Red Hill, peculiarly fits him for the duty of conducting the first experiment of a reformatory in the West Riding. He was strongly recommended for the post by the Governor of the Wakefield House of Correction, and is thus spoken of in the last report of the Rev. G. B. DE RENZI, chaplain of the Leeds Borough Gaol:—"I have the highest opinion of his qualifications to achieve success on a much more extended field of labour." The Calder Farm School was officially certified about six weeks ago as a reformatory under the Acts of 1854 and 1855, and it has now eight boys under training. We believe the Committee are ready to receive applications for the admission of others from Magistrates, whether of the riding or of this borough, and have printed forms at the service of gentlemen wishing to sentence boys to detention, which, when filled up in any instance, will enable them to determine whether the case is such as they can take charge of. The sound reasons for this precaution, and for the resolution of the Committee not to fill up their school suddenly, we shall notice hereafter. A reformatory for girls, as an enlargement of the House of Refuge for discharged female prisoners, is also in course of preparation at Wakefield, though (we hear) not advancing to completion so rapidly as might be desired. From the circumstance that we, with unusual opportunities for obtaining information, had not heard of this excellent project until a few days ago, we conclude the public to be wholly ignorant of it; but, from its nature, we are quite sure that its claims need only to be generally understood in order to obtain public recognition in the form of funds, not only for fairly establishing, but also for permanently maintaining it in a course of usefulness. We had the pleasure, the other day, of visiting a similar institution in successful operation at Birmingham; and the Girls' Reformatory School at Red Lodge, near Bristol, under the care of Miss CARPENTER, is doing great good with the cordial support of benevolent persons in that neighbourhood.†

THIS, then, is what has been already accomplished, with a view to meet the wants of the West Riding, and it must be remembered that it has been done by a few gentlemen, chiefly Magistrates, notwithstanding the resolution of the Bench last April, to memorialise Government in favour of establishing reformatories in this district by means of county rates. No public meeting on the subject has been summoned, to consider the claims of Juvenile Reformatories on the notice and support of the Riding; and yet we feel certain that had that course been taken, the call would have been responded to, and progress made in the establishment of other institutions besides those at Mirfield and Wakefield. But measures of another kind have been taken, to which we must now invite attention. The intention half intimated by Mr. DENISON in his letter to the county ratepayers is, it appears from Mr. M. MILNES's speech in Parliament on Friday, now full blown; and the Leeds Borough Justices have just adopted a memorial to Government, expressing approval of the voluntary efforts now being made to establish Juvenile Reformatories in England, but a strong conviction also that, to be permanently efficient, the funds requisite for their support "should not in any manner be made dependent on private sympathy or individual voluntary contributions." Our Borough Magistrates further affirm that the State ought to provide the entire cost, or that power should be vested in the Town Councils of large and populous boroughs to employ for that purpose corporate funds of which they have the control by law. So that both Mr. DENISON's bill and this memorial rest on the same assumption,—the inadequacy of the present law, relying partly on voluntary effort, to originate and to work satisfactorily these new institutions. We must add that, taking Mr. C. BAKER's letter to ourselves as an exposition of Mr. DENISON's plan, the idea of the Hon. Gentleman is to establish and support by rate six reformatories in Yorkshire, each to accommodate 100 children, and thus to provide for the wants of Leeds as well as of the entire county.

We have felt it right to mention all these facts for the information of our readers, in order that they may fully understand the present position of this subject.

THE question is not one involving conscientious differences, like that of State Education. Mr. INGHAM, when last addressing the ratepayers through our columns, supposed that "denominational bigotry" might cloud the perceptions of some persons as to the real merits of Mr. DENISON's proposition; but he need have no fear on that point. All parties are, we believe, agreed that when the State takes the charge of children into its own hands, whether for their good or that of society, it is bound to supply to them, as far as practicable, that parental training which is the best security for mature virtue. Those, therefore, who have the misfortune to differ from the recommendations lately given by county and borough justices, do so on the simple ground of *practical expediency*. It is universally allowed that the experiment of juvenile reformatories ought to be made throughout England, and therefore in the West Riding: the point

* The other members of the Committee are H. W. Wickham, Esq., M.P., E. Akroyd, W. R. C. Stansfield, J. E. Greenwood, C. Hardy, F. Wormald, E. B. Wheatley, and J. Hague, Esqrs.

† We hope it is not out of place in one of a series of articles on a subject which this lady has made peculiarly her own, to say that more knowledge on reformatories wherever existing, on the actual state of Juvenile Delinquents in this country, and on the principles which should regulate us in seeking to restore them to society as useful members, is to be obtained from Miss Carpenter's two volumes, entitled "*Reformatory Schools*," and "*Juvenile Delinquents*," than from any other works within moderate compass.