

## CALDER FARM REFORMATORY SCHOOL.

The sixth report of the Committee of the Calder Farm Reformatory School, Mirfield, has just been printed. The school was established in November, 1855. The statistics given of its working are of considerable interest. Since the commencement of the school, 145 boys had been received under detention, and 9 free,—making a total of 154. Up to the 31st December last, 54 had been finally discharged, 10 of them being transferred to other schools. Of the remaining 44 we are informed in the report that 33 are known to be doing well; 5 are doubtful; 2 not known; and 4 have been re-convicted. Of the 4 who returned to dishonest habits 1 was only a week in the school; 2 had absconded from the school, taking their clothes; and the fourth, (the only case of re-conviction after regular discharge) was an invalid unfit for work, the son of a brothel-keeper, whose house was his only home. These facts speak forcibly in favour of the efficiency of the reformatory system as conducted in this school. From the report we also quote the following remarks and suggestions respecting the treatment of young criminals:—

“The demand for boys among employers of labour has steadily increased, and has sometimes been greater than could be supplied. Many of these employers, living in the neighbourhood of the school, have had constant opportunities of seeing and knowing the behaviour of the boys, both there and in situations; and the fact that with that knowledge they are glad not only to employ, but to receive them into their houses, is strong evidence of the general good conduct of the boys, and of the success which, under God's blessing, has attended the treatment they have received.

“The rapid increase in the number of boys sent to this as well as to other Reformatory Schools during the last eighteen months, requires serious consideration in a more general point of view. It appears that a considerable number of boys are now being sent for whom the protracted, and therefore expensive, treatment of such schools is not really needed. From the table furnished by Mr. Shepherd, and printed in the Appendix, it appears that of 1,775 boys committed to the Wakefield Prison for the first time during fifteen years, 1,128, being more than 63 per cent., never returned to that prison. Some may have left the Riding and got into other prisons; but, as boys do not wander as adults do, their number is probably small. Hence, for a large proportion of boys once convicted of crime, simple imprisonment seems to have been sufficient to check them from proceeding further in that course; and for them therefore the treatment of the Reformatory School was not needed.

“But that such treatment is urgently required for those boys who, having been once imprisoned, do incur a second conviction, is proved by another table, which shows that of boys twice imprisoned, nearly 84 per cent. returned a third time.

“Hence, a second conviction raises a very strong presumption that the boy has become an habitual, as distinguished from what may be called a merely casual offender; while on a first conviction the presumption is the other way.

“Another remarkable fact indicated by these, as by other prison statistics, is, that if a second conviction follow upon the first at all, it generally follows soon. Of the 36.6 per cent. who did return to prison after a previous conviction, 27.4 per cent., or three-fourths, returned within two years, and 33.8 per cent., or eleven-twelfths, within four years.

“Hence, as it is very difficult to judge upon the first conviction of any boy whether he be such an habitual offender as to need the treatment of the Reformatory; and as, if he be such an offender, it is so highly probable that a second conviction will, ere long, afford both another opportunity for subjecting him to such treatment, and a conclusive proof that he needs it; it seems better generally to try the effect of a short imprisonment on a first conviction, and invariably to send to the Reformatory on the second. The exception to the former rule is when the boy's age at his first conviction is such that he may probably be above sixteen,—when he can no longer, by law, be sent to a Reformatory, before a second conviction.

“By these and other considerations, many managers of Reformatory Schools have been induced to recommend that, as a general rule no boy should be sent to a Reformatory School under the age of twelve, on a first conviction; but that every boy should be sent upon a second; which rules the Committee of this School would strongly urge upon the attention of magistrates.

“The second rule,—that boys should generally be sent to the Reformatory on a second conviction,—appears to require more attention than it has hitherto received on the part of the magistrates in the West Riding, and the borough towns which commit to Wakefield Prison. During 1861 there have been 24 cases out of 43 in which boys who had been previously in prison were again committed, without being ordered to go to the Reformatory afterwards. Excluding the cases of disorderly apprentices and disorderly paupers, which are not cases for the Reformatory, more than half these 24 cases appear to have been such as to require that treatment. In some cases a boy has been sent to prison three times over within the year, yet left to be discharged upon the country after two or three months; most probably to train other boys to crime, and multiply indefinitely the number of young criminals. Such a course of proceeding tends utterly to frustrate the first object of Reformatory Schools, which is,—to keep those habitual offenders who are generally trainers of others to crime, from spreading the contamination and raising constantly fresh crops of evil.”