

4.—Judicial and Penitentiary Statistics.

The collection and publication of criminal statistics was first authorized by an Act of 1876 (39 Vict., c. 13), and the results have been published upon a comparable basis in an annual report from that time to the present and are now collected and published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics under the Statistics Act (8-9 Geo. V, c. 43), which provides for the receipt of an annual return by the Bureau from every court or tribunal administering criminal justice. The statistics as published show for each judicial district (155 in number) the offences that have been committed, analysed to indicate the nature of the offence, the age, sex, occupation and social condition, birthplace, etc., of the convicted, and the sentences imposed. The Act also provides for the collection of the statistics of penitentiaries, prisons, reformatories and jails, as complementary to the preceding.

1.—General Tables.

The statistics relate to years ending September 30, the latest report being for 1923. Beginning with the report for 1922, an enlargement of the classification of offences has been adopted, by which offences of juvenile offenders are compiled separately from those of adults. The term "indictable" applies to offences of adults only, similar offences committed by juveniles being termed "major" offences; similarly, "non-indictable" offences of adults are termed "minor" offences when attributed to juveniles. All current tables have been worked out for 1921 and subsequent years in accordance with the new classification, but a comparative historical table, giving the totals for different classes of criminal offences and minor offences, including juvenile delinquents, from 1876 to 1923, is here published (Table 20), together with a more detailed table for recent years (Table 21). In the consideration of the former it should be remembered that while the criminal code undergoes little change over periods of time, the figures of summary convictions depend very much upon the changes in the customs of the people, and are apt to increase with the increasing urbanization of the population. The most significant column of Table 20 is the figure of criminal offences per 100,000 of population. Attention may be drawn to the substantial decline in the proportion of both criminal offences and minor offences to population in the past two years, convictions for criminal offences having declined from 284 per 100,000 population in 1921 to 266 per 100,000 population in 1923, and convictions for minor offences from 1,731 per 100,000 in 1921 to 1,487 per 100,000 in 1923.

It should be understood that the classification of offences in these general tables, 20 and 21, is irrespective of the more technical classification into "indictable" and "non-indictable" offences under the Criminal Code. The object here is to show a broad historical record of criminal and minor offences respectively.