

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 gaols, as complementary to the preceding.

1.—General Tables.

The statistics relate to years ending Sept. 30, the latest report being for 1926. 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 those of juvenile delinquents, is here published (Table 23), together with a more detailed table for recent years (Table 24). 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 23 is the figure of criminal offences per 100,000 of population. Attention may be drawn to the increase in the proportion of both criminal offences and minor offences to population in the past year, convictions for criminal offences having risen from 277 per 100,000 population in 1924 to 287 per 100,000 population in 1926 and convictions for minor offences from 1,535 per 100,000 in 1924 to 1,803 per 100,000 in 1926.

It should be understood that the classification of offences in these general tables 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.