

*First Offenders.*

The same considerations apply with somewhat less force to all first offenders; there are many of them who have yielded to some sudden and overwhelming temptation, but who are not criminals at heart or by choice; if they had half a chance to try again they might easily become fairly respectable citizens. Here, too, an intimate knowledge of the previous history, temperament, and surroundings of the offender, gained by the investigation of an expert, together with power to treat the case, so far as punishment is concerned, in such a manner as the apparent lack of deliberate criminal intent and the possibility of reform demand, would make it entirely possible for a discriminating and humane judge to save a life from shipwreck, and society from an additional menace. Under the present system, however, there is no choice—the prison sentence must be imposed, and at its close the offender is quite apt to come forth a pariah and an Ishmael, whose hand is henceforth against every man.

*Confirmed Criminals.*

As to the confirmed criminal, the man who spends his life serving prison or jail sentences, with brief intervals in which he is propagating his kind and executing new crimes, the question is somewhat different, but the need of knowledge of the man's history is just as important, not that he may be treated with clemency or in the hope of reform, but that measures may be taken so that the criminal who has made crime his profession may be permanently placed where he can neither continue the race of criminals nor instruct other in his business.

It is said that nine-tenths of the serious crimes in England are committed by men who have already served one or more terms of imprisonment, and who may be called permanent and confirmed criminals. Probably the same percentage would not hold good in this country, but doubtless it would be very large.

When it is ascertained that a man's sole purpose in life is to commit crime, is it not monumental folly to imprison him for a short term, and voluntarily send him forth again, time after