

We know how often it is abused. But the only available force in such cases is an enlightened and sympathetic public opinion. This may succeed in fixing a general standard to which a merchant or employer must conform in order to receive patronage. Men ought to be made to feel that their custom depends as much upon their moral treatment of shop-girls as upon the prices of their goods. People may combine to announce their intention of not patronizing those who have a reputation for injustice to shop-girls. But to make any plan of this kind effective there must be organizations for investigating all individual complaints, and to determine the truth and the extent of injustice. Much can be done in this direction. As an illustration, we might refer to what would be accomplished by some such combination in New York City if men and women philanthropically inclined could combine to have the present law enforced that every store should have seats for the female clerks. This law is wholly ignored, and yet it only awaits the interference of the proper persons to have it enforced. Public opinion, if it were organized in this and in other matters, could do a very effective work in diminishing the enormous amount of injustice inflicted by the irresponsible power of employers. It could, if it would, as easily establish a moral as it does a social criterion for judging men, and so insist that the possession of so much power be subject to some limitations or responsibility to society as the shop-girl has to submit to in her subordinate position of servant. Public opinion can say to such men: "You are accountable to us for your treatment of shop-girls; and if this is not just, you must expect the withdrawal of our patronage." This may not cure all the evils incident to the system, but it would remove many of them and be at least a step in the direction of a higher ideal and a better state of society.

The third class of cases concerns the payment of wages, which are notoriously insufficient in many cases. The effect

of this state of things, we all know, upon many thousands of shop-girls is disastrous; and there are few questions of a moral and social character that should be of more interest than this. But there is no simple solution of the problem. Indeed, we fear it is altogether insoluble until we have changed human nature more than has been done in the past. Nevertheless, the injustice so frequently observed can be diminished by a strong public opinion and the general method just indicated. But the organization and investigation must be vastly more extended than any yet practised. They must take into account a very complex system of moral and economic conditions. Hence it will be found that no adequate treatment of the problems due to insufficient wages can be presented until we know the causes of them, and these causes are various. Sometimes the cause is the injustice of the employer, sometimes it is a set of unavoidable economic conditions, sometimes it is the want of sufficient knowledge or skill on the part of the shop-girls, sometimes it is due to some capricious change of public taste and demand for certain goods affecting the profits of the merchant, and sometimes it is caused by the competition between differently situated shop-girls. These several causes give rise to as many classes of distinct cases which require correspondingly separate methods for their treatment. The girls' boarding-house, which is now a common institution in most of our large cities, is a solution of the last problem or set of cases. It consists in providing board and lodging for those poor girls who are obliged by the labor market to take less wages than the cost of living would require. Those cases due to unavoidable economic conditions are not so easy to prescribe for; but it may be doubted whether they are very numerous. The other three classes, however, will yield, if they yield at all, only to moral forces of some kind. On the one hand the shop-girl must be educated to her duties, and be as ready to render just service to the employer as