

stood elbow to elbow with stylish "soubrettes" trained to the business and vulgar in their display. Timid creatures hid their faces and seemed already ashamed of their mission. But here and there, one frankly ambitious spoke of chance and opportunity, of her great desire to "appear," and of her belief in a vocation. But for the most part a tacit truce of rivalry prevailed. Each knew that the other's gain might be her loss. The battle was often for bread.

Esther Venn had arrived at the theatre at a quarter-past ten, and finding many already in the corridor before her, she took a place by the iron gates and waited patiently until she might be called. Tall and countrified and very quietly dressed, she was at once the subject of remark; and the poodle dog which sat so patiently upon the edge of her skirt did not escape some pleasant comment from the light-hearted girls who would have made friends with him. Some said, not unkindly, that dogs nowadays earn more money upon the stage than human beings! while one dark-eyed beauty from Clapham expressed the opinion that if justice were done she would be riding in a carriage with a King Charles spaniel upon her knee. To these and others Esther answered with what kindness she could, that the dog would never leave her; and being strange to London she had thought it would be no harm to take him to the theatre—a confession which provoked some merriment and not a little instructive chatter.

"Ah," said one, "you'll have many things to