

the town, I was told afterwards that the astonishment of my shipboard friends was wonderful to behold. I simply vanished down a back street! Well, I found that my mother had recently died, and fortunately nobody remembered me. Somebody else was running the brothel; it was still a notorious place. I looked into the *salon*, where the same tawdry plush furniture stood stiffly round the walls, and three or four wretched girls were wandering about waiting for the horrors of the evening. I gave them a fifty-pound note between them, as a thank-offering to Providence for my own escape unharmed from that sort of existence, which would have been mine, too, if I hadn't run away as I did; and I went straight down to the docks and took ship back to Europe, so as to forget their faces.

"I left the ship at Marseilles, and went into Spain with some English friends. We made our way inland to Granada, where we used to have wonderful picnics on the mosaic floors of deserted Moorish palaces. And we used to pick oranges in the light of the tremendous moon, and the little bats used to dart to and fro in the darkness. Then I crossed the mountains to Biarritz, where I wore my best clothes again, and lived like a queen. And so back to Paris and the grey skies and the rain. I stayed there for a year, dancing and dining and spending my money, enjoying myself sometimes and sometimes asking only for the end of it all. But I never really liked living in a city: I was always oppressed by the presence of the poor and the destitute; and, indeed, I found myself giving more than I could afford to ease their sufferings. It was the same in London. Wherever I looked I saw misery and want and squalor; until I became haunted with the weary sighs of the unfortunate, and their dumb, appealing eyes seemed to look at me, like the eyes of ghosts, from every dark corner of the streets.

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