

**THE BEGGARS OF
PARIS (PARIS
QUI MENDIE)**

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The Beggars of Paris (Paris Qui Mendie) by Lady Herschell & Louis Paulian

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LADY HERSCHELL & LOUIS PAULIAN

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The Beggars
of Paris



Lady Herschell

THE BEGGARS OF PARIS

(PARIS QUI MENDIE)

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. LOUIS PAULIAN

BY

LADY HERSCHELL

EDWARD ARNOLD

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37 BEDFORD STREET

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P R E F A C E .

I HAVE ventured to translate this book by M. Louis Paulian because it seems to me to be an eminently useful, as well as an interesting, work on a subject which is of no less moment in England than in France.

Here, as in France, begging is made a profession. And it is very important that the public should realize the fact, that 'thoughtless almsgiving, instead of relieving misery, promotes mendicity.'

The author of 'Paris qui Mendie' speaks with the experience of one who has put the question of mendicity to a personal test, and who has beaten the beggar in the various branches of his own trade. No one therefore is a better authority on the subject, and M. Louis Paulian's experiences will, I am sure, be welcome in England.

Good work has been done in the direction indicated by M. Paulian by the Charity Organisation and Mendicity Societies, and as regards infant suffering by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, but much remains to be accomplished. Professional beggars still abound in England, and too ready an ear is lent to their appeals.

A. A. H.

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THE BEGGARS OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WAS LED TO BECOME A BEGGAR.

TEN years ago, putting into practice advice often given by M. Jules Simon, I resolved upon an undertaking which, at first sight, did not seem to be a very complicated one.

I tried to ascertain the total sum which passes every year in Paris, by way of voluntary gifts, from the pockets of the so-called rich into the pockets of the so-called poor.

Do you comprehend the nature of this undertaking?

I left on one side the *Budget de l'Assistance Publique*, which is so important. I took no heed of all the sums voted by Parliament, the General Council of the Seine, or the Municipal Council of Paris, in aid of extreme destitution. I wished only to find the total amount given voluntarily to the poor, whether in the shape of a ten-franc piece, representing the subscription of a member of a charitable society, or ten centimes given to a beggar in the street.

It is now ten years since I began to make this calcula-

tion, and I have not yet been able to finish it, because not a week passes—scarcely, indeed, a day—in which I am not made aware of the existence of a new charitable society. Consequently, I find fresh figures before me to add to my sum.

And yet, if I were to conclude my calculations now, it would be easy to prove, particulars in hand, that the sum exceeds ten million francs—ten millions, renewed year by year, and which, as those who give it suppose, is destined to relieve misery in Paris.

It would seem that with this enormous sum, added to the fifty millions of the *Assistance Publique*, there ought not to be, I do not say one poor man—there will always be rich and poor, as there will always be people with intelligence and those of weak intellect—but one miserable being, deserving of pity, to whom society could not immediately give the necessary relief.

I do not know whether real destitution is greater to-day than it was fifteen or twenty years ago, but it is quite certain that the number of beggars who ask alms in the street from passers-by has never been so great. And so in proportion as the receipts intended to alleviate distress increase, the distress itself seems to develop. In face of this surprising fact, I find myself in the same situation as the engineer who, having constructed a channel to bring water from its source to a town, discovers with surprise, when his work is completed, that of all the water that rushes in full volume into one end of his conduit, only a few drops arrive at the town. 'Certainly it must have found a means of escape,' the engineer remarks. The same idea occurred to me, and during several years I have sought to find the leakage by which the water of Parisian charity runs out and is lost.