

MY FIRST MEETING WITH DAUNT 15

"To-day," I replied with a smile, "my appetite is satisfied."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Six thousand francs now, sixty thousand when I return. Really, Baron, the mission is perilous and I am by no means tired of life."

He considered the proposition for the space of several minutes, then at last, seemingly resolved, nodded his head and murmured, "Very well, I accept."

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Three days afterwards I was in Sedan, armed with much French money, a paint-box, easel, palettes, brushes, and many rolls of canvas. My name was Rupert de Grandville, and I was a poor beggar of an artist fresh from the Latin Quartier seeking subjects for the Academie. It was a jolly life that I led for the next few weeks, always in the open air, often camping out like a gipsy, with the turf for my couch, the stars for a canopy, the world for my bed-chamber. I enjoyed it to the top of my bent, the spice of danger in my occupation robbing me of all thought of ennui, giving a spur to my energies, and investing the work itself with a species of intoxicating and irresistible fascination. My progress was slow, but sure. I accomplished much without arousing the least suspicion, and despatched many canvases to an old friend in London, whom I begged in accompanying letters to keep them safely until I arrived to claim them.