

match was reached. This has been immemorially the reliable point in performances of the kind he was giving, but he introduced it in a manner of his own.

Standing by the edge of the platform, as the friend and herald of Joqard, he first loudly challenged the men before him, every one ambitious of honor and renown, to come up and try a fall; and upon their hanging back, he berated them. Wherever a tall man stood observable above the level of heads, he singled him out. Failing to secure a champion, he finally undertook the contest himself.

"Ho, Joqard," he cried, while tying the leading strap around the brute's neck, "thou fearest nothing. Thy dam up in the old Caucasian cave was great of heart, and, like her, thou wouldst not quail before Hercules, were he living. But thou shalt not lick thy paws and laugh, thinking Hercules hath no descendant."

Retiring a few steps he tightened the belt about his waist, and drew his leathern jacket closer.

"Get ready!" he cried.

Joqard answered promptly and intelligently by standing up and facing him, and in sign of satisfaction with the prospect of an encounter so to his taste, he lolled the long red tongue out of his jaws. Was he licking his chops in anticipation of a feast or merely laughing? The beholders became quiet; and Sergius for the first time observed how very low in stature the hamari seemed.

"Look out, look out! O thou with the north star in the tip of thy tail! I am coming—for the honor of mankind, I am coming."

They danced around each other watching for an opening.