

Sergius left a friendly glance with Lael.

Where the roadway from the gate led up to the platform an opening had been made in the close wall of spectators attracted by the music and dancing. In the opening, the hamari was slowly coming forward, his turban awry, his brown face overrun and shining with perspiration, his sharp gypsy eyes full of merriment. With the leading strap over a shoulder, he tugged at Joqard. Sergius laughed to see the surprise of the men and women, and at the peculiar yells and screams with which they struggled to escape. But everybody appearing in good nature, he said to the Princess: "Do not be concerned. A Turk or Persian with a trained bear. I passed him at the gate."

He saw the opportunity of speaking about the brass plate on the post, and while debating whether to avail himself of it, the hamari caught sight of the party at the edge of the portico, stopped, surveyed them, then prostrated himself in the abjectest Eastern manner. The homage was of course to the Princess—so at least the assemblage concluded; and jumping to the idea that the bear-keeper had been employed by her for their divertisement, each man in the company resolved himself into an ally and proceeded to assist him. The musicians were induced to suspend their performance, and the dancers to vacate the platform; then, any number of hands helping them up, Joqard and his master were promoted to the boards, sole claimants of attention and favor.

The fellow was not in the least embarrassed. He took position on the platform in front of the Princess, and again saluted her Orientally, and with the greatest deliberation, omitting no point of the prostration. Bringing the bear to a sitting posture with folded