

better a man becomes, the more surely the first becomes the slave of the second. and yet, herr peter, ill wager that your wife will confound the two words to day, and think you have sorely transgressed against the ought. these are bad times for the wish. van der werff nodded assent, then briefly and firmly explained to his friends what he intended to disclose to the prince. the three men separated before the burgomasters house. tell the prince, said van hout, on parting, that we are prepared for the worst, will endure and dare it. at these words janus dousa measured both his companions with his eyes, his lips quivered as they always did when any strong emotion filled his heart, and while his shrewd face beamed with joy and confidence, he exclaimed: we three will hold out, we three will stand firm, the tyrant may break our necks, but he shall not bend them. life, fortune, all that is dear and precious and useful to man, we will resign for the highest of blessings. ay, said van der werff, loudly and earnestly, while van hout impetuously repeated: yes, yes, thrice yes. the three men, so united in feeling, grasped each others hands firmly for a moment. a silent vow bound them in this hour, and when herr von nordwyk and van hout turned in opposite directions, the citizens who met them thought their tall figures had grown taller still within the last few hours. the burgomaster went to his wifes room without delay, but did not find her there. she had gone out of the gate with his sister. the maid servant carried a light into his chamber; he followed her, examined the huge locks of his pistols, buckled on his old new birth in a life that has scarcely begun. your discourse, replied the bishop, only confirms my opinion that this question is one for a higher assembly. we will now close our discussion of that point, and go on to the care of the poor. call in the women, my good justinius. the deaconesses came into the room and took seats at the lower end of the table, paulina, the widow of pudeus, taking her place opposite the bishop in the middle of the other women. she had learnt from selenes kind nurse in what pressing difficulties the children of the deceased steward now found themselves, and that hannah had promised to assist them. the deacons first gave their reports of what their works had been among the poor; after them the women were allowed to speak. paulina, a tall, slight woman with black hair faintly streaked with gray, drew from her dress, which was perfectly plain, but made of particularly soft, fine white woollen stuff a tablet that she placed before her, and slowly raising her eyes and looking at the assembly she said: dame hannah has a melancholy story to tell you, for which i crave your sympathy. will you be so good as to allow her to speak paulina seemed to feel that she was the hostess to her brethren. she looked ill and suffering; a line of pain had settled about her lips, and there were always dark shades under her eyes; still, there was something firm and decisive in her voice, and her glance was anything rather than soft and winning. after her commanding tones hannahs tale sounded as soft as a song. she described the different natures of the two sisters as lovingly as though they were her own daughters, each in her own way seemed to her so worthy of compassion, and she servant who devoted himself to the interpretation of signs: the gods may have overset the proud image to give a warning token to hadrian. the immortals do not mix in the affairs of men in our day, said the sailor; but in such a fearful night as this peaceful citizens remain within doors and so leave a fair field for caesars foes. we are all faithful subjects, said the baker indignantly. you are a pack of rebellious rabble, retorted a roman soldier, who like the whole cohort quartered in the province of hermopolis, had formerly served in judaea under the cruel tinnius rufus. among you worshippers of beasts squabbles never cease, and as to the christians, who have made their nests out there on the other side of the valley, say the worst you can of them and still you would be flattering them. brave fuscus is quite right cried a beggar. the wretches have brought the plague into our houses; wherever the disease shows itself there are christian men and women to be seen. they came to my brothers house; they sat all night by his sick children and of course both died. if only my old governor tinnius rufus were here, growled the soldier, they would none of them be any better off than their own crucified god. well, i certainly have nothing in common with them, replied the baker. but what is true must continue true. they are quiet, kind folks and punctual in payment, who do no harm and show kindness to many