Sittings of the Division Courts of the Co. of Halton
For the Year 1886.

No. of Sittings and No. of Clerks.	Clerks.	Jan.	Mar.	May.	July.	Sep.	Nov.
8	Wm. Panton	29	26	28	9	24	26
8	R. Balmer	6	3	5	3	11	3
12	L. Grant	12	16	11	7	17	9
8	J. Matthews	13	11	13	8	16	11
8	S. R. Lister	11	8	10	0	9	8
8	W. J. Bastedo	5	2	4	2	10	2

...ral Sessions of the Peace and County Court Sittings, with or without Jury, Tuesday 5th ... ...cember, at 11 a.m.
...y Court Sittings, without Jury, Tuesday, 6th April, and 5th October, at 10 a.m.
...ty Court Sittings—Formerly Terms—Monday, 4th January, 5th April, 5th July, and 4th October, ...m., early day.
...e Chambers.—Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week, except on Court days and ...m. at 11 a.m.
...f Criminal Justice Accounts.—Monday, 4th January, 5th April, 5th July & 4th October, at 3 p.m.
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VANITY HARDWARE.

By ALAN MUIR.

CHAPTER XIII.

VANITY IS QUITE ILLEGIBLE.

At last the little patient was discharged from her hospital, and, all danger from infection being over—so the doctor said—Maud Neville was able to thank her benefactress in person. That energetic young matron, for all her own brilliancy and her knowledge of the fashionable world beside, could not but feel that Tom needed no excuse for being smitten by Vanity Hardware. The slight paleness which long confinement had cast over Vanity's face enhanced her beauty, and the light gracefulness of her manner was chastened by an unusual gravity. Most of all, there was a strange expression in her eyes, a look at once resolute and imaginative, that elevated her whole aspect. Maud felt a secret respect for the young actress, and could not utter her thanks with the sisterly warmth which she desired to express.

And yet could Maud have read Vanity's secret! The actress was possessed with an idea which Maud would certainly have called wicked, if not mean. Her soul was concentrated upon her purpose of wayward affection and merciless revenge. Her calculation was that Nancy's attractions would be about used up by this time Vanity judged her just the woman to fatigue a man soon, and to be too stupid, too self satisfied, to detect the weariness she provoked. This provincial Nancy, ignorant of the art of pleasing, could never rekindle an affection which at the first she could not keep alive. Well Vanity knew with what deadly strength she could confront her rival now. *Her* armory was not a mere store of clumsy rustic endearments. Willie had known her spell once. She knew exactly how to captivate him. As to what might follow, Vanity did not greatly concern her elf. Willie she considered her own, establishing her right by reasoning, to which neither convention nor religion were admitted, but which satisfied Vanity well enough.

It was this wicked, reckless purpose which made Vanity grave and calm and superior as she talked with Maud Neville; and in the whole conversation honest Maud was altogether at fault.

Maud poured out her thanks, praised Vanity's bravery and said whatever the occasion suggested. Vanity heard her with an air of condescending interest, as one listens to the thanks of a grateful child.

"I am glad I risked it," she said, speaking to her own heart while appearing to answer Maud. "If I had died I should not have cared. But I am alive!"

Compressed lips, nostrils dilated, eyes flashing with purpose, the gait of one who goes to conquer, so she turned and walked to the window, for she could not keep still with Maud's face looking into her own. Her heart was not like Maud's. She must go her own way, and speak as little as possible with this bright, warm-hearted, honorable woman. So—

"I am alive," she said again, and then looked out of the window.

"Alive!" repeated Maud Neville. "But suppose your beauty had gone!"

Vanity shuddered. Then she remembered her own former thought.

"If God or Fate had wanted my beauty, it would have been taken. Now I am twice my own."

This was Greek to Maud; but she had something to say herself, and, for her own reasons, she managed to mention the name of her brother. Vanity was still standing at the window looking into the garden. At mention of the soldier's name Maud saw a sarcastic smile upon the lips of the actress, but it vanished quickly, and when Vanity turned to reply her expression was one of perfect indifference. Maud thought she could read what was passing through Vanity's mind, and judged that now was the time to say:

"I am so proud of my brother!"

"No wonder," Vanity replied. "He is a handsome man."

But she might have been talking of a statue. Yes; in that very tone she might have said, "It is a handsome statue."

Maud considered this indifference rather overdone. "Vanity means to give me a quiet hint," thought Mistress Maud. "Vanity means to say, 'Yes, your brother is a wealthy, handsome soldier. Such are apt to fancy that any poor girl they look at grows conscious and agitated and so forth. Such a girl am not I.'"

Thus misinterpreting Vanity's manner, and full of generous enthusiasm for her brother, Maud went on cleverly, as she imagined:

"Tom is good as well as handsome. Oh, he has a noble heart! For all his easy, self-indulgent ways, he thinks more of other people than of himself. I am sure"—Maud felt great artistic prudence in her warmth—"that if you think that Tom would trifle with the happiness of another you little understand his character."

Would Vanity notice this s'gnificant trifle! Yes, again the sarcastic smile played over her lips. Maud saw all now. There stood before her a virtuous young actress, whose great beauty had enabled her to know the ways of the wicked world, and who was disdainfully incredulous of masculine goodness.

"You may smile," she continued, with growing imprudence, for her temper even came her, although her mood was generous. "I suppose you have guessed that my brother admires you! Well, he does admire you. Indeed, it would be hard for him to see you and not admire. But let me tell you my brother is not the style of man who can fancy one woman and love another!"

Vanity turned about, not the least excited, but with an expression of amusement.

"He looked twice at me when once would have been enough." This she said with graceful cayety. "But I vow I did not think he would have told you."

"He did tell me!" cried Maud eagerly. "That shows what Tom is!"

All at once she recollected that she had gone very far. With a fine frankness, which Vanity far more admired than Maud had admired her pretty ways, Mrs. Neville took the hand of the actress in her own.

"I have not been wise. Tom—by just mentioned it to me in passing. Of course, you know," she stroked Vanity's hand, "and you will not be offended with me, there would be many, many things to be thought of before—before—"

"Before he married me."

Vanity finished the sentence with charming playfulness.

"You really are good natured!" Maud exclaimed. "It is so good of you to take it in that kind of way. I wished to be straightforward, but you might so easily have taken offense."

This inexplicable Vanity seemed ready to burst into tears at once.

"I understand you," she replied. "You are good and honorable, and you have spoken as you ought."

It was not altogether surprising that the actress should be a little touched. But why was Maud made mysteriously conscious that she friendless woman who stood before her had an individuality into which she could not penetrate!

"I said what I thought best," Maud said somewhat awkwardly. Then, recovering herself, "Your address repaired my blunders."

"Make yourself easy," Vanity answered, resuming her amused look. "Your brother will have no need to consider prudence or anything else. I would not marry him if he asked me."

"What?" exclaimed Maud Neville. She was fated to forget herself in this conversation. "Not marry Tom!"

For, remember, reader, Tom was fit for an earl's daughter. Maud always said so. And Tom might have an earl's daughter if he tried. Maud said that too. Hence the accents in which she exclaimed, "Not marry Tom!"

"No," Vanity said cleverly; "I would not marry Tom."

"Then you love somebody else!"

"I love somebody else."

"Do tell me—forgive me for asking. Is he handsome!"

"Handsome! O, more than handsome—to me."

Vanity breathed a sigh.

"Is he rich!" Maud inquired, not with empty curiosity, but with affectionate interest such as a sister might show.

"No, poor—quite poor in eyes like yours."

"I hope he knows what he has won!" cried Maud. "I hope he will treasure you!"

"He is my fancy," Vanity answered lightly. "He was—I mean he is—the man I took a fancy to."

"You choose to talk in that way," Maud Neville said; "but yours must be a deep, true heart—"

Vanity listened to these admiring words with composure, but Maud could not refrain from again expressing surprise.

"So you would not have married my bro her if he had asked you!"

"No, indeed," Vanity answered laughingly. "Shocking taste, I know, but I would not."

"And that only shows what a good heart yours must be," Maud said, once again at loggerheads with her discretion. "I hope you will be happy in your love."

Vanity could say nothing in reply. But she had her own secret locked in her breast. For a time I wandered up and down and did not enter, but at last I crept in with my breaking heart.

"Well I remember that old Norman church, with its few worshipers, and the white altar at the end. As Lenterad, the clergyman was reading, 'Come unto Me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The words brought no tears to my eyes, and they did not touch my heart, but I felt a kind of curiosity. I said to myself, 'Let my try if this really means anything.' I went up to the altar as if I had been called by name, and knelt down in a sort of trance.

"Now let me tell you a fact. As I knelt there it seemed to me that an invisible hand was put into mine. I did truly and actually feel as if a hand clasped me. I looked up. No one was near me. The clergyman was some way off. Then I seemed to hear a voice saying, 'Are there no sorrows beside your own? No breaking hearts but yours? No sickness? No hunger? No nakedness?'

"Then for the first time I realized that I was only one in a great fellowship of grief. I was overwhelmed, but with a blessed sorrow now.

"And I have been happy ever since in my own way. People say all sorts of things about religion; I only know what religion has been to me. A new life—a new life when the old one was withered and blasted and dead! For all that I tell you came from no effort of my own will—just as a hand might come to one who is drowning. All that was twenty years ago."

"What became of *him?*" Vanity asked.

"He went his way and prospered. He is married now, with a large and happy family. He is a judge."

"A judge!" Vanity said scornfully. Then she added, "I dare say he is not the only one!"

CHAPTER XV.

CONFLICT.

Vanity's illness might be compared to the course of a river. Tears was the match of delirium, when the patient was impetuous and wilful; then came the period of blindness and silence, as if the stream, sinking down between deep banks, rolled on dark and noiseless to the sea.

Amidst all her pain and stupor one idea was ever before the girl's mind. Her face, her beautiful face, her sole treasure, the talisman which was to recover her Willie's lost love—what would become of her beautiful face!

"Tell me," she moaned to Sister Catherine one day, after the doctor had gone, "is there any hope?"

"Yes, child," she answered soothingly; "with care you will recover."

"I don't mean that," she replied. "Shall I be marked?"

"He fears you will."

"And I shall look into the glass and see—horror!" Vanity moaned. "Let me die! only let me die!"

Sister Catherine spoke no more at that time. Later on she took an opportunity of saying to her charge, with a soothing, half-playful, but most tender manner:

"I don't wonder if you grieve over that pretty sweet face. But listen, child: you have to learn to say, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' And you will learn to say it."

"Never!" cried Vanity—"Never!"

"Think, my child, how much sadder it might have been. Not only yourself, but another might have felt the anguish. If there had been any one to whom your face was as the light of life—"

"There is," Vanity replied hastily—"I tell you there is!"

"Who can that be?" the sister asked.

"A man whom I loved, and who loved me. We had promised ourselves to each other, and a woman came and stole his heart. She was rich, and could have married a dozen equally good in her eyes; but she stole—my husband."

"Your husband!"

"Yes, by all that makes true marriage, by vows, by tenderness, by all that what you call marriage cannot insure."

"Did he marry this woman?"

"Yes."

"And she is living?"

"Yes."

"Then he is hers—not yours."

"No; he is mine—not hers."

"Vanity, this is wicked."

"I meant to win him back," Vanity continued; "I knew he could not resist me. But now my face is destroyed, and all is over, and I want to die."

"Thank God, who has given you time for repentance," the sister said gravely. "His ways are not our ways. He is leading you by paths you know not."

"I don't want to repent," Vanity answered. "I cannot do what I want, I am baffled, but I have not repented—no, and I will not repent."

Another time, as Vanity lay in the darkness, the sister heard her say:

"Tell me, were you always good?"

"Always good, my child!"

"I mean serious, you know. I am sure you were not always serious!"

"Why are you sure?"

"Something in your voice."

"You are right," Sister Catherine said quietly. "I was not always serious."

"Of course not," Vanity rejoined. "Besides, you are too good-looking."

"Indeed!" Sister Catherine remarked, amused at this frankness. "Are good-looking people never serious?"

"None that I have seen," Vanity answered—except you, I mean. And you only began when—"

Here she stopped, and said no more.

Two or three hours later, Sister Catherine, finding her a little easier, said to her:

"Would you like me to tell you about a man who—once—wanted to marry me?"

There was a strange tremor in that usually calm voice as the sister spoke.

"Do let me hear it," Vanity said. "I hope he was nice!"

"You shall judge, child. We met when he was twenty-five and I twenty-one, and we both were poor. We fell in love. I think he really loved me. I know I really loved him. The story is commonplace enough—at least to the ear. After we had waited five years for fortune to enable us to marry, he secured a good appointment. My heart was throbbing with bliss when I received a letter from him, written in a strange style of cold justice and formal honor, which stabbed me to the heart.

"We were engaged lovers—that he admitted. Morally and legally he was bound to me, but he had ceased to care for me; the thought of a marriage with me, he must frankly tell me, was repugnant to him. What would I desire him to do?

"The cold business-like tone, the surface common sense of the letter was chilling. I wrote and released him, and when I closed the letter I looked up, and there was my life around me, a desolate wilderness.

"Child, do you know what it is to have the dull aching of brain and heart, hour after hour, day after day?"

"I know it," Vanity answered from her darkened bed. "Oh, how bitterly I know it!"

"My strength failed, my face grew aged with anguish, my hair turned white. I watched the signs, and was glad of them. I had been well taught, or I might have killed myself. Perhaps family pride restrained me. So I went on day after day, hating the light as it came morning by morning, lying down with the wish that I might never waken any more.

"We were living in the country, and one Sunday morning I went out for an early walk. Since my sorrow I had never gone to church, and I heard the bells ringing in the village for an early service. The idea struck me that I would go in and see if there could calm my mind. So irresolute was I, that for a time I wandered up and down and did not enter, but at last I crept in with my breaking heart.

"Well I remember that old Norman church, with its few worshipers, and the white altar at the end. As Lenterad, the clergyman was reading, 'Come unto Me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The words brought no tears to my eyes, and they did not touch my heart, but I felt a kind of curiosity. I said to myself, 'Let my try if this really means anything.' I went up to the altar as if I had been called by name, and knelt down in a sort of trance.

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CHAPTER XVI.

REPENTANCE.

Courage, energy, tenderness and rare knowledge of the heart was shown by Sister Catherine. She never lost patience with Vanity; she never shrunk from reproving her reckless notions; and she never lost sight of the method by which she must lead this wandering child of nature into the way of peace.

In one of her devotional books the sister had met this phrase: "The expulsive power of a new affection." She knew that if Vanity's wild longing were to be cast out, something better must first take its place. With a woman of Sister Catherine's stamp there could be no doubt as to what this new affection must be.

"There is no life without love, my child," she said one day. "We cannot live without love."

"Some of us will try," replied Vanity, in a hard voice.

"I thought once as you think," the sister answered, with the tranquility of experience. "I know better now."

"What love have you found?" Vanity asked dryly.

Sister Catherine rose, and went across the room.

"I am looking at His image now," Sister Catherine said. "Shall I describe it to you?"

"Please," Vanity said, with half curiosity.

"His face is pale. His eyes are cast down. Drops of blood are on His cheek. His hands are spread out and nailed to His cross."

"Oh, I see."

Vanity spoke in a disappointed tone.

"He only refuge for a broken heart, my child," the sister said seriously. "I have looked at His image hanging there hour after hour. I have read in His worn face that He loves me. I have asked Him to accept my love in return; and that I may love others and serve them, as He did me."

"I don't understand it," Vanity answered; "and I never shall."

"You do understand that for love of us He suffered and died," the sister continued. "And that those whom He so loved and died for should love our love and pity too. There is no heart so broken, no life so poor, but it can love Him back, and find joy in loving others as He loved."

"I don't understand it," Vanity repeated. "It is quite beyond me."

But the good sister, not daunted, renewed her efforts and her instructions time after time, and she found that Vanity began to listen, and to ask questions. The odd reckless frankness of the actress sometimes shocked the sister, but quickened her interest in this singular being. Sometimes she smiled at the way in which Vanity would parry her thrusts.

"Yes," Vanity said scornfully, "I am not deceived. If ever I turned serious, it would only come about because first I had turned ugly!"

"Better that," Sister Catherine remarked, "than go through life with a fair face and a hard and hardening heart."

"Yes," Vanity rejoined, with impetuous scorn, "but what is such goodness worth!"

Another time she said:

"You talk about giving up my own will. Well, if I had turned serious when I was admired and all that, there would have been my side to it; but now—"

"My poor child!" the sister replied, "my poor unhappy child!"

Vanity laughed.

"In one way I am serious enough. I feel dull. All the serious people are dull."

"Now, Vanity," Sister Catherine said, "you told me when you heard my laugh outside in the garden that you never heard anything so mer