

## A Book of the Week.

## THE TRUANTS.\*

It is an unfortunate thing that Mr. Mason has chosen for his new book almost exactly the same motive which served him for "The Four Feathers." This particular idea—that of a man self-banished and undergoing the greatest hardship and risk to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of a certain woman—would appear to have filled his whole mind, since, if my memory serves me, it was no longer new when he wrote "The Four Feathers," but had already done duty in a short story.

The hero of this new book, moreover, resorts to Africa, as did the last, in order to go through those harrowing experiences which it seems are necessary in order to make some women believe in you.

Both the women in Mr. Mason's present story possess in a high degree that quality of hardness which characterises all his women. They both occupy the only position in which Mr. Mason can fit women—that of forming the man's goal, to be painfully won, after long waiting and trial. The fidelity of the men in these stories is somewhat surprising; but they never seem to meet any other women but just the one they are thinking about.

Pamela Wardale, in her early youth, meets and loves a young man who dies. She thereupon supposes herself dead to love, and refuses all and sundry who propose marriage to her. Warrisdén is not deterred by her refusal. He comes again and again. In fact, it really puzzles Mr. Mason to think upon what pretext he can possibly keep them apart until the end of the book. He invents a highly curious one. Pamela tells her much-to-be-pitied suitor that she will not marry him until Tony Stretton, who is submerged in Africa, returns to his wife. For such a stipulation no reason whatever exists, except the one given above. But it supplies a motive to set poor Warrisdén too, groping in the Dark Continent, with nothing but the hope of Pamela to encourage him in his search for the missing man.

Tony Stretton has left his silly little wife in order to make his fortune. Instead of doing this he loses it, and the contempt in his wife's letters stings him into determining to make her hold a higher opinion of him. The means he adopts to this end are to vanish and leave her no trace of him, never writing, or making any communication. He finds it most surprising that his wife should not exactly grasp the reasons for this drastic treatment. She even dares to suppose that the man who no longer cares to know whether she is alive or dead, possibly no longer cares for her. He leaves her rich, idle, young, pretty, quite alone—more than alone, abandoned. Is it wonderful that she tries to fill in some of her desolate days with flirtation?

The writing of Mr. Mason's book is delightful. He is always self-restrained, dignified, cultivated, interesting. But his people's motives and ways are so preposterous as to spoil half one's pleasure in him.

The part concerning Tony's enlistment in the Foreign Legion, and the forlorn creatures with whom he there rubs shoulders, is admirable; but one's common-sense will keep on intruding, and wondering why Tony Stretton was not where he should be, in England, looking after his wife and his property.

\* By A. E. W. Mason. (Smith, Elder and Co.)

It may seem ungracious to cavil at a book so full of good moments. The account of Warrisdén's visit to the Blue Fleet, Norrards of the Dogger, in quest of the truant Tony, and the chapter entitled "The New Road," are examples of what the author can do. He is master of his material. A motive less strained, and he will give us a great novel. G. M. R.

## The Leaves Fall.

The leaves fall, whispering, whispering  
The story of human life:  
That all must be parted some day,  
All leave this world of strife.  
For leaves fall, floating, floating,  
Scarce touched by the rough winds' blast:  
As the lives of our little ones slowly  
Become but things of the past.  
And leaves fall, rustling, rustling,  
Noisily tumbling down:  
As the mirth of youth and childhood  
Stops, startled by Death's dark frown.  
And leaves fall, whirling, whirling,  
With red and golden dyed:  
As the course of the strong and hearty  
Cut off in the midst of pride.  
And leaves fall, trembling, trembling,  
All sere and old and hoar:  
As the aged pilgrims traverse  
A path with return no more.

S. K. VINES.

## What to Read.

"Ivan the Terrible." By K. Waliszewski. Translated from the French by Lady Mary Loyd. With a portrait.

"The Private Life of Two Emperors: William II., German Emperor, and Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria."

"The Marriage Yoke." By Arabella Kenealy.

"There and Back." By Frank Richardson.

"The Celestial Surgeon." By F. F. Montresor.

"Beatrice of Venice." By Max Pemberton.

"Traffics and Discoveries." By Rudyard Kipling.

## Coming Events.

October 28th.—Quarterly Meeting of the Matrons' Council, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 4 p.m.

October 29th.—Annual Meeting of the Society of Women Journalists at the Institute of Journalists, Tudor Street, E.C., 3 p.m. At Home, 4 to 6 p.m.

November 7th.—Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland at York (five days).

November 9th and 10th.—Meeting of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, York.

November 25th.—Meeting of Delegates of the Provisional Committee for the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 2.30 p.m.

To consider and take action upon a letter from Miss L. L. Dock, Hon. Secretary, International Council of Nurses.

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