

reasonably expect its heroine to write, during the months that she is supposed to be waiting in Spain in the hopes of hearing from the man she loves. Well, it would be quite likely, to begin with, that she would lay her scene in the place she had chosen for refuge, Grenada, with all its new and picturesque glamour; and, having her mind full of her own troubles, she would not be likely in her plot to get very far away from her own situation: her heroine would probably be a young woman with an unhappy past, who loves a man but cannot accept his offer without telling him the story of her life. But, if the former volume were true, what she would avoid, above all things, in her present novel, would be the specific details of her own life, the life of the theatre; and if she had never before written fiction, she might find it by no means easy to create a plot, and so would fall back upon the simpler expedient of taking the main lines of the situation she needed straight from actuality, using some story made familiar through the newspapers to the whole civilised world. As it happens, this is precisely what the author of *The Life Mask* has done. Her heroine is by birth a young Southern woman, who was married when little more than a girl to a middle-aged Englishman, and who has spent ten years of her young life in British prisons, because unjustly convicted of having murdered her husband while nursing him, by administering an overdose of morphine. To take material of this sort and develop it into a story that is neither melodramatic nor cheap, but carries the reader along to a logical and eminently satisfactory solution of all the issues, obtaining its strong effects by sheer simplicity, is an achievement which deserves an honest commendation.

#### "THE LIFE MASK"

It will be remembered that the anonymous volume which appeared somewhat more than a year ago under the cryptic title "*To M. L. G.*," purported to be, not a novel, but an actual life history, written for the purpose of conveying a message to the man whom its author had refused to marry, because she could not bring herself to confess to him, face to face, the details of her earlier life. Consequently, the new volume by the same writer, which this time is confessedly fiction, possesses an interest quite aside from its merits as a story. Without venturing to express a personal opinion as to whether *To M. L. G.* is fact or fiction, we may, at least, inquire, assuming, for the moment, that the story were true, what sort of a novel we might