

THE TELL-TALE LETTER

By George Elmer Cobb

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"Tell her right out like a man that you love her, Hoyt."

"I can't do it."

"Why not?"

"She might think me daring. She might laugh at me. I never have a chance to be alone with her. No, I'll write."

Dale Bright placed an affectionate hand on the shoulder of his friend, Marvin Hoyt, but smiled quizzically.

"Hoyt," he said, "you're a good fellow, pure gold all of the time and all the way through. The matter is though that you underestimate yourself. Miss Eva Walters is a most charming young lady, but if she turns you down it will be because she isn't worthy of you, for a more deserving fellow I don't know. Write if you think best, only get through with this dilly-dallying, for you're getting sallow and peaked worrying over it."

Hoyt was one of these young men having so profound a reverence for womanhood that he shrank at the thought of intruding his views upon the especial one of the sex who had won his heart. He really believed that if his suit was denied he would die forthwith of heartbreak. His shyness, and, as Bright had said, his low valuation of his own merits, had kept him in the background with pretty Eva Walters for over a year. Now the indecision was becoming unbearable and he determined to break the ice in some way.

So Hoyt went to his lonely room and wrote the letter that was to solve his fate. He placed it in an envelope, sealed it and at dusk started for the home of his beloved.

Hoyt entered the front yard, but hesitated. Then he summoned up his courage and advanced up the steps and onto the porch. The front door was open. Looking through the

screen he had a view of the dining room. He recoiled as there echoed a burst of merry laughter, as he noticed three or four girl friends of Eva seated at the evening meal. That was enough for Hoyt. He was loath to face so many. He nervously drew the letter from his pocket. He pulled up the slot cover of the mail box and dropped the missive within it. Then he stole down the steps, feeling the coward but also realizing that a long



Stole In and Out Among Shrubbery.

contemplated deed was over and done with.

"She'll get it in the morning at the latest," he soliloquized, as he left the place. "She'll answer tomorrow. My! It's a strain—the suspense. Wonder if I've done the right thing."

Hoyt went home. Over and over in his mind he ran all the pros and cons of the incident. He went to bed finally to go over them again with alternate fear, hope, faith, doubt, gloom, brightness. He could not