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*The Shadow
on the Dial*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I PETTIGREW'S FOLLY

C OME, Enid! It's time we were going home."

CHAPTER II LEILA'S POINT OF VIEW

M ISS Leila Speer, the Shoe King's daughter, sat in her bedroom at Grandma Fletcher's house in Burton and indignantly reviewed the prospect. The rest of her family—indeed, the entire household—had long since gone to bed, but there was no sleep yet in prospect for the disgruntled daughter of the shoe millionaire.

CHAPTER III THE SUN-DIAL

I N the few days that had passed since the coming of the Speers, many things had happened.. Naomi and Enid discussed them as they leaned over the rail of the narrow little foot-bridge across Fletcher's Cove, the following Saturday morning. They were on their way to the village to get the morning mail and do the week-end errands for the household, and they had stopped to stare down into the swirling brown water of the incoming tide while they reviewed the unusual events of the week.

CHAPTER IV A RECORD OF THE PAST

W HEN Ronny had tiptoed over to the chest and glanced into it, he turned to the girls with a look of disgust and disappointment on his pale, expressive little face.

CHAPTER V LEILA PRESENTS SOME DIFFICULTIES

I T was obvious, that evening, that Miss Leila Speer, the Shoe King's daughter, was still in anything but an amiable humor, and that not a little envy and suspicion was added to her other dissatisfactions. She was still on the veranda when the trio returned from their expedition, and was gloomily regarding a letter lying in her lap.

CHAPTER VI LEILA IMPROVES AN AFTERNOON

W HEN the trio had departed that afternoon. on their ponies and Hannah, they left Miss Leila Speer in bed in a darkened room, and ministered to at intervals by a concerned Grandma Fletcher, with aromatic spirits. of ammonia and smelling-salts. Inactivity and. a prolonged diet of chocolates had done their. work, and the afflicted young lady found herself. suffering with a violent sick headache of. the most humiliating type.

CHAPTER VII RONNY GETS DOWN TO BRASS TACKS

I T was late that afternoon when the three left. Pettigrew's Folly. It had not been a particularly. profitable afternoon as far as their researches. had gone. Apart from the disclosure. of Grandma Fletcher's relationship to Judge. Cotesworth, Ronny had learned nothing new,. though they had spent several hours in the secret. room and had gone over the old paper very. carefully.

CHAPTER VIII LEILA PROVIDES SOME SURPRISES

T HE afternoon waned and shadows began. to creep into that upper room of Pettigrew's. Folly, finding the three still bent, each. over a dusty law-book or ancient ledger once. belonging to old Judge Cotesworth. Finally. Naomi glanced up.

CHAPTER IX EVENTS MOVE ON

B UT as it turned out later, Leila and Ronny. did not ride over to Pettigrew's Folly the. next morning. Instead, Leila made another expedition,. quite on her own responsibility and. unknown to the others until it was over. It. happened that that morning Grandma Fletcher. suddenly found her kitchen supplies lacking in. baking-powder, at a critical moment when. Hagar was otherwise occupied. Leila, who was. idling on the porch, saw Grandma Fletcher. preparing to hurry away in the direction of the. village and was prompted to ask the reason.. And hearing it, she herself

volunteered to go. on the errand, as she knew Grandma Fletcher. begrudged the time it would take from her. morning's work.

CHAPTER X COUSIN FRANCES ENTERTAINS

MISS Frances Marvin was not expecting. company that afternoon. Her. front hair was still in kid curlers and she sat at. ease, in a wrapper and comfortable old slippers,. on her back piazza, fixing the greens for supper.. (Every one in Burton dined at noon and had. supper as the evening meal.) The only other. member of her family, her rheumatic elder. brother, sat hunched up in a chair in the kitchen. and fretfully complained at intervals or asked. the same question over and over again.

CHAPTER XI RONNY FINDS HIMSELF UP A TREE

ON the afternoon of the same day on which. Leila had made her visit to Miss Frances. Marvin, Ronny had planned an expedition of. his own. Naomi and Enid were to play in a. school basket-ball team match that afternoon,. and Leila had confided to him that she was off. in the direction of the redoubtable Cousin Frances,. on a quest for information, so Ronny was. left with time hanging heavy on his hands and. he determined to put it to a good use. He had. not yet been able to make much progress with. Coosaw, and here was a chance to cultivate the. amiable old darky's acquaintance—perhaps to. some profit. Ronny went out and saddled the. pony Spot, and cantered away in the direction. of Pettigrew's Folly.

CHAPTER XII ONE DRAMATIC DAY

THE lure of a perfect early-spring morning. on the South Carolina coast! Ronny. couldn't resist it. He stood on the edge of the. bluff after breakfast and sniffed the fragrant. salt breeze blowing in from the ocean, over the. marsh islands. The river was an intense blue.. The tide was high and every indented cove or. "skid," as it was called, was

filled to the brim.. A mocking-bird trilled a complicated melody. in a near-by clump of palmettos.

CHAPTER XIII A CONFERENCE WITH COOSAW

I T was the following morning, Sunday, and. Grandma Fletcher and Naomi had just returned. from a call on Cousin Frances, who was. confined to her bed with the sprained ankle. which had resulted from her tumble over the. bluff, the day before. When Grandma Fletcher. had disappeared into the kitchen to superintend. Hagar with the Sunday dinner, Naomi was. captured and led away by the three other young. people and guided down to a secluded nook below. the bluff where they could be well out of. sight of the house. There they seated her on. an old overturned boat, and Ronny pulled something. out from beneath it and laid it in her lap.

CHAPTER XIV THE BEGINNING OF THE END

W HEN Ronny turned in at Grandma. Fletcher's gate, he was met by Enid,. who came flying out at his approach.

CHAPTER XV GRANDMA FLETCHER COMPLETES THE RECORD

I T'S a part of the story,," went on Grandma. Fletcher, gazing once more into the fire,. "that I know very little about; I can only surmise. the details. Harriet Stepney Cotesworth,. of course, I never knew, personally,—she died. before I was born,—but from what I've heard. of her, she must have been a rather selfish,. self-centered, scheming woman. People said she. had the old judge wound round her little finger,. although he was a very forceful personality.. It was common talk that she tried in every way. to influence him against his son, and I'm pretty. certain now that she succeeded beyond what. any one surmised.

CHAPTER XVI THE SHADOW ON THE DIAL

T HE hours are never so long as when one. is waiting for them to pass in order that. a mystery may be solved. The

four young people. found this to be the case on the morning. after they had taken Grandma Fletcher and. Alan Carter into their secret. To tell the truth,. Grandma was nearly as impatient as the others.. Mr. Speer had much business on his mind that. morning, before he left for Florida, and Alan. was kept closely shut in with him while he went. over his affairs. But at last the Shoe King was. driven to Hardeeville, where he was to catch. the Florida express, and Alan returned to give. his whole attention to the problem of the sun-dial.

CHAPTER I

PETTIGREW'S FOLLY

[Table of Contents](#)



COME, Enid! It's time we were going home."

[Table of Contents](#)

"Oh, let's stay just a little longer! It can't be time for the mail yet, and we want to get that on the way back. It's heavenly here this afternoon, Naomi!"

"Well, I reckon a few moments longer won't matter." And Naomi Fletcher settled back in her comfortable seat among the roots of a great live-oak tree and turned her attention once more to the book in her lap. Her younger sister, Enid, continued her parade up and down the long avenue that led to the steps ascending to the house—a curious little figure draped in great strands of gray Spanish moss that hung from her head clear to her feet. She was also decorated with a wreath of red japonica blossoms stuck in the moss that surrounded her brows.

"Whatever are you playing at, Enid?" called Naomi, with lazy interest, as she snuggled more deeply into the heap of moss she had piled up against the tree for a cushion. Her book had temporarily ceased to interest her and her sister's actions certainly were peculiar, for Enid was gesticulating and murmuring to herself in a way that suggested an escaped lunatic more than anything else. But Naomi always found Enid's play-acting worth inquiring into.

"Huh! Can't you see I'm Queen Titania in 'Midsummer Night's Dream'? And I do wish you'd come and be Oberon or something. I'm tired of doing it all by myself."

"I don't feel like acting anything to-day; and besides, it's too late now," Naomi answered. "And I'm tired of acting

Shakspeare, anyhow. Tell you what! Let's come here tomorrow and hunt up some old clothes in the attic and play Sherman's army is coming and the mansion is going to be attacked."

"Hurrah! All right. You be the beautiful Mrs. Harvey Pettigrew defending her home and we'll get old Coosaw and Missouri to be the faithful slaves that help you. And I'll be old Sherman! We'll have a heap of fun." Enid was all enthusiasm and interest. She discarded the japonica blossoms and Spanish moss and went to sit by her sister under the live-oak. "I never get tired of playing that," she added, "and the setting is so wonderful!"

They both glanced back at the stately old mansion at the end of the broad avenue of live-oaks which led to the veranda steps. These steps were of brick, ascending in a gracious sweep to a wide portico running the length of the house front. The roof of the mansion was steeply "hipped," and without the customary dormer-windows on the third floor. Great curved wings flanked each end of the main building, and long, many-paned windows, innocent of glass, stared like sightless eyes. Neglect and decay had touched the place with blighting fingers, and only two gorgeously blossoming japonica bushes flanking the steps suggested that life had ever been vivid, gracious, or beautiful in this lonely wilderness.

"It must have been wonderful, before the war!" sighed Naomi. "Too bad that they should have called it 'Pettigrew's Folly.' It seems too stately a place for that name. I wish they hadn't changed it! I've heard Grandma say it was originally called Cotesworth Hall, years and years ago when old Judge

Cotesworth built it. It wasn't so big as this then—only that old part in the back and some that was torn down afterward. But when Mr. Pettigrew of Charleston married the judge's niece, Lucilla Stepney, he started to make it into a regular mansion, as beautiful as any in Charleston. He tore down some of the old part and built all this new front and the wings, and that gorgeous hall inside with the curving stairs. Every one, they say, told him he was kind of crazy to begin it, for it was eighteen-sixty, and the war was threatening. But he had plenty of money and he didn't think the trouble would last long, so he only laughed at them and went ahead. The war came, though, before he got it finished, and he went right into it and was killed the second year. So they always called it 'Pettigrew's Folly' after that."

At that moment, Enid caught sight of an infirm old colored man hobbling out from the back of the house, an ax under his arm, evidently bound to replenish the woodpile.

"There's old Coosaw!" she exclaimed. "Let's get him to come over and tell us again about how they hid the silver when they heard the Yankees were coming, and how Mrs. Harvey Pettigrew stood on the steps and met them, and what happened to the sun-dial, and all that. I never get tired of hearing him tell it. He gets so excited."

"No," decided Naomi, "we mustn't stay another minute. The sun's going down and Grandma will be worried. You gather up our books while I go and find Beauty and Spot."

She set off toward a near-by field where two shaggy ponies were grazing, and came back leading each by its bridle. Ten minutes later, the two girls were cantering along the white oyster-shell road through the sweet-scented South

Carolina pine barrens, toward the little village of Burton, two miles away. Between the tall trunks and undergrowth of scrub palmetto and swamp-cypress, the girls could catch fleeting glimpses of the sunset sky and a beautiful river winding between its marsh islands. Swamp-maples stood decked in crimson-tasseled blossoms, and in the air there was an odor of budding jessamine. Naomi, in the dignity of her sixteen years, rode along sedately, with only an occasional remark to her pony, "Spot." But Enid, three years younger, sang or whistled as the fancy took her and urged her mount through every brown runlet of swamp water that skirted the route. Presently they turned into the head of the main village street, cantered down its length toward the river, and drew up at the door of the tiny box of a post-office, where Enid dismounted and ran in for the mail.

She came out with empty hands, but her dark eyes were snapping with excitement and news.

"No letters ... but Mr. Collins says there's company over at our house. We'd better hurry back. Strangers, he says. Some people that came in here and wanted to know where they could find a place to stay for the night. Mrs. Taunton's boarding-house is full up with salesmen, so he sent them over to Grandma. She'll probably want us to help, so we'd better rush!"

In a breathless hurry, Enid mounted her pony and they galloped away. Crossing Fletcher's Cove over the narrow wooden bridge, they arrived somewhat winded at their own back door.

Grandma Fletcher—white-haired, tiny, but amazingly active—came out, dusting her hands together energetically

in a way she had when excited.

“You-all come right in here and get busy!” she called to them gaily. “Company’s here ... strangers ... and Hagar is rushing to get her biscuits into the oven and I’ve been fixing the rooms. Enid, you set the table; and Naomi, you run over to Mrs. Gervais and see if she can’t give you some jonquils and japonicas for it. I hate a table without flowers, and none of ours are out yet. Hurry, all of you; you hear?”

Grandma Fletcher’s gay energy was always infectious and the girls found themselves rushing to do her bidding, not even giving themselves time to inquire who the company might be. It was not till supper was at last on the table, and Grandma had tinkled the little silver bell, that their curiosity could be satisfied. Out from one room emerged a stout, heavy, red-faced man accompanied by a boy of about fifteen who was as thin, pale, and delicate in appearance as his companion was the opposite. Out from the other room came a young girl of Naomi’s age, apparently, very up-to-date in dress, whose slightly supercilious expression was belied by a pair of beautiful and appealing brown eyes.

“Mr. Speer, from Bridgeport, Connecticut,” Grandma Fletcher introduced them, “and his daughter, Miss Leila, and his son Ronald. They came out here from Savannah to-day. Mr. Speer’s thinking of buying some property in Burton.” There was a murmur of desultory remarks and they all sat down to the table, Grandma Fletcher supplying most of the chat and Mr. Speer replying in brief monosyllables. The young people contributed nothing to the conversation. Naomi and Enid felt very much in the dark about the status

of these guests till Grandma Fletcher whispered to them in the kitchen after supper:

“That’s *the* Speer—the ‘Shoe King,’ they call him. You know—Speer’s Shoes. He’s rolling in wealth, they say. Going to buy up some big property around Burton and make it his winter home. Mr. Tripp told me Speer was all around here in his big car last week, looking up places. He likes the coast here ... thinks the hunting and fishing are good ... and wants his son to stay here a while ‘cause he’s kind of delicate.”

“What place does he think of buying?” queried Naomi.

“Don’t know yet ... or, at least, he hasn’t decided, I reckon. A good many of those plantations are for sale. Heard he was over at the Stickneys’ across the river, among others.” And Grandma turned her attention to domestic matters.

The girls saw no more of the visitors that night, as the new-comers retired to their respective rooms directly after supper. Nor were they up next morning when Naomi and Enid ate their breakfast and hurried away to school. When they returned to dinner, at noon, they caught a brief glimpse of the strangers, but the three were nowhere about when the girls got back at three o’clock. Grandma Fletcher explained, however, that they were intending to remain another day at least, and had gone off somewhere in their car.

“Well, they’re nothing to us!” sighed Enid, who had, however, been secretly hoping they might become acquainted with the young folks. “Let’s go and do what we planned yesterday, Naomi.”

They saddled the ponies and galloped off after consuming a hasty snack of gingersnaps and jam in the kitchen, and taking along a liberal supply as a bribe to carry to old Coosaw and his wife, Missouri, that the two negroes might lend their assistance in the play the girls intended to stage that afternoon.

What, then, was their astonishment, on entering the unkempt grounds about "Pettigrew's Folly," to behold a big dark-blue limousine parked before the front steps. And to spy further old Coosaw and Missouri bowing and curtsying to a bulky figure just emerging from the door, on to the portico. At the same instant, from around toward the back of the mansion, there strolled the boy and girl who had spent the night before in the Fletcher home.

"Hullo! What you doing here?" called Ronald Speer, who from the first had seemed more inclined to be friendly than either of the other strangers.

"Be quiet, Ronny! That's no affair of yours," admonished the girl, languidly, in tones the two could perfectly hear as their ponies ambled up the drive.

"Oh, we often come here—nearly every day, in fact," answered Enid, conversationally, as their ponies came to a stop near the car. "We've always liked the old place, it's so picturesque, and we ride over here to study and read and ... and ... do lots of things. The place belonged to a relative of ours once and we ... sort of ... love it."

"It's horridly tumble-down," offered Miss Leila Speer, her supercilious expression intensified to the nth degree.

"Yes, it is," acknowledged Naomi, "but we love it just the same, in spite of that. I think it's all the more interesting for

being old, especially if you know its history.”

“I’ll say it is!” agreed Ronny, a glow of color coming into his pale cheeks. “I think an old place like this is the cat’s mittens, all right, and the more tumble-down it is, the better I like it. Gee! Just look at those big chimneys up there and that corkscrew staircase ... or whatever you call it ... inside. It’s like the things you read about. And I’ll bet it has *some* history, too!”

His slang somewhat took the girls’ breath away. While they were trying to think of a suitable response, Mr. Speer came down the steps and entered his car, nodding to Enid and Naomi.

“I’m going over to the next plantation,” he told his children. “You were there yesterday, so you probably won’t care to come. Stay here for a while and talk to these young folks. I’ll be back later.” And he had started the engine and driven away before they could reply.

“Come over by that big tree on the river bank,” suggested Enid to the rest, “and we’ll gather some Spanish moss and sit down and be comfortable.” She turned the ponies loose as she spoke, and gathered up a great armful of moss from the lawn and led the others to the roots of the immense live-oak under which Naomi had sat the day before. Here, spreading the moss for a cushion, they all sat down around the gnarled trunk, Leila lowering herself very gingerly, lest she damage her pale fawn-colored sports-suit. It was obvious that she was bored to extinction.

“Now, tell us all about the place!” demanded Ronny, curling his thin legs under him in the moss. “Gee! but that river is blue, though! Ain’t it different from that copper-

colored old Savannah! And what's that big old white stone lying right over there? Looks like a piece of marble. Queer place for it—right on the river bank."

"That's a sun-dial," Naomi enlightened him. "It used to stand there in the middle of the lawn, before the war—the war between the States, I mean. It was a beautiful piece of white marble on a fluted pillar, with a broad marble base. They say it was sent here from England, when the house was built. Then, one night during the war something happened to it ... nobody knows quite what, but it was found next morning lying where it is now, with the top, the dial part, gone, and no one has ever found it since."

"Well, doesn't that beat the Dutch!" marveled Ronny. "Did the Yankees come along and knock spots out of the old ranch, too?"

Enid answered by giving him a little account of the history of the place and was just about to launch into a description of what happened as Sherman's army was approaching, when the snort of a car was heard and Mr. Speer's limousine once more entered the battered gate at the end of the driveway. Two minutes later, T. G. Speer, the Shoe King, stood before them, a smile of rather grim satisfaction on his usually impassive countenance.

"Well, I've done it!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands and glancing at his boy. "Do you like this place, son?"

"Sure I like it!" cried Ronny. "I told you I thought it was a crackerjack!"

"Can't see what you like about it, myself. To my mind it ain't a patch on the Stickney place ... house gone all to pieces that way. But you're the one to be suited, son. I'll go

in to Savannah and buy this here Pettigrew place to-morrow morning. But I warn you, I gotta tear down that old rat-trap and build a new house ... and it may take all summer.”

For reasons quite unknown to the Shoe King, his announcement sent a pang of utmost dismay to the hearts of at least two of his audience.