

**LEISURE HOUR
SERIES.
RECALLED TO LIFE**

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Leisure Hour Series. Recalled to Life by Grant Allen

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GRANT ALLEN

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CHAPTER I.

UNA CALLINGHAM'S FIRST RECOLLECTION.

[T may sound odd to say so, but the very earliest fact that impressed itself on my memory was a scene that took place—so I was told—when I was eighteen years old, in my father's house, The Grange, at Woodbury.

My babyhood, my childhood, my girlhood, my school days were all utterly blotted out by that one strange shock of horror. My past life became exactly as though it had never been. I forgot my own name. I forgot my mother tongue. I forgot everything I had ever done or known or thought about. Except for the power to walk and stand and perform simple actions of everyday use, I became a baby in arms again, with a nurse to take care of me. The doctors told me, later, I had fallen into what they were pleased to call "a Second State." I was examined and reported upon as a Psychological Curiosity.

But at the time, I knew nothing of all this. A thunderbolt, as it were, destroyed at one blow every relic, every trace, of my previous existence; and I began life all over again, with that terrible scene of blood as my first birthday and practical starting point.

I remember it all even now with horrible distinctness. Each item in it photographed itself vividly on my mind's eye. I saw it as in a picture—just as clearly, just as visually. And the effect, now I look back upon it with a maturer judgment, was precisely like a photograph in another way too. It was wholly unrelated in time and space; it stood alone by itself, lighted up by a single spark, without rational connection before or after it. What led up to it all, I hadn't the very faintest idea. I only knew the Event itself took place; and I, like a statue, stood rooted in the midst of it.

And this was the Picture as, for many long months, it presented itself incessantly to my startled brain, by day and by night, awake or asleep, in colors more distinct than words can possibly paint them.

I saw myself standing in a large, square room—a very handsome old room, filled with bookshelves like a library. On one side stood a table, and on the table a box. A flash of light rendered the whole scene visible. But it wasn't light that came in through the window. It was

rather like lightning, so quick it was, and clear, and short-lived, and terrible. Half-way to the door, I stood and looked in horror at the sight revealed before my eyes by that sudden flash. A man lay dead in a little pool of blood that gurgled by short jets from a wound on his left breast. I didn't even know at the moment the man was my father; though slowly, afterward, by the concurrent testimony of others, I learnt to call him so. But his relationship wasn't part of the Picture to me. There, he was only in my eyes a man—a man well past middle age, with a long white beard, now dabbled with the thick blood that kept gurgling so hatefully from the red spot in his waistcoat. He lay on his back, half-curved round toward one arm, exactly as he fell. And the revolver he had been shot with lay on the ground not far from him.

But that wasn't all the Picture. The murderer was there as well as the victim. Besides the table, and the box, and the wounded man, and the pistol, I saw another figure behind, getting out of the window. It was the figure of a man, I should say about twenty-five or thirty: he had just raised himself to the ledge, and was poising to leap; for the room, as I afterward learned, though on the ground floor, stood raised on a basement above the garden behind. I couldn't see the man's face, or any part of him, indeed, except his stooping back, and his feet, and his

neck, and his elbows. But what little I saw was printed indelibly on the very fiber of my nature. I could have recognized that man anywhere if I saw him in the same attitude. I could have sworn to him in any court of justice on the strength of his back alone, so vividly did I picture it.

He was tall and thin, but he stooped like a hunchback.

There were other points worth notice in that strange mental photograph. The man was well-dressed, and had the bearing of a gentleman. Looking back upon the scene long after, when I had learned once more what words and things meant, I could feel instinctively this was no common burglar, no vulgar murderer. Whatever might have been the man's object in shooting my father, I was certain from the very first it was not mere robbery. But at the time, I am confident, I never reasoned about his motives or his actions in any way. I merely took in the scene, as it were, passively, in a great access of horror, which rendered me incapable of sense or thought or speech or motion. I saw the table, the box, the apparatus by its side, the murdered man on the floor, the pistol lying pointed with its muzzle toward his body, the pool of blood that soaked deep into the Turkey carpet beneath, the ledge of the window, the young man's rounded back as he paused and hesitated. And I also saw, like an

instantaneous flash, one hand pushed behind him, waving me off, I almost thought, with the gesture of one warning.

Why didn't I remember the murderer's face? That puzzled me long after. I must have seen him before. I must surely have been there when the crime was committed. I must have known at the moment everything about it. But the blank that came over my memory, came over it with the fatal shot. All that went before, was to me as though it were not. I recollect vaguely, as the first point in my life, that my eyes were shut hard, and darkness came over me. While they were so shut, I heard an explosion. Next moment, I believe, I opened them, and saw this Picture. No sensitive-plate could have photographed it more instantaneously, as by an electric spark, than did my retina that evening, as for months after I saw it all. In another moment, I shut my lids again, and all was over. There was darkness once more, and I was alone with my Horror.

In years then to come, I puzzled my head much as to the meaning of the Picture. Gradually, step by step, I worked some of it out, with the aid of my friends, and of the evidence tendered at the coroner's inquest. But for the moment I knew nothing of all that. I was a new-born baby again. Only with this important difference. They say our minds at birth are like