

# The Major's Promise

By C. W. Leadbeater

The story which I am about to relate is one of my earliest recollections, for I heard it many years ago from my great-grandfather. Though at the time of which I write he had passed by eight or nine years that limit of fourscore winters which is scripturally announced as the extreme period of human existence, he was an erect, soldierly old man still, and displayed not only a perfect retention of all his faculties, but a degree of both mental and physical vigour very unusual at so advanced an age—as may be inferred from the fact that he was in the habit of riding out daily until within three weeks of his death, which occurred at the age of ninety-two.

It will not, therefore, be open to the sceptic to dismiss my tale as distorted by the dreamy semi-recollection of dotage; nor, on the other hand, can he ignore it as exaggerated by the childish fancy of the listener. For I depend not on my own memory, but on a carefully-written account of the affair (dated in the year of its occurrence) found among the old man's papers after his death. It is fair to add that, though it was not until some twenty years later that I had an opportunity of perusing this paper, I found it to agree in every particular with my own vivid recollection of the story.

That written account I reproduce almost literally, supplying from my memory only some few details of the conversations, and of course altering the names of all the actors. I remember that my great-grandfather used to tell us that some author (he forgot the name) called upon one of the friends who shared this experience with him, and begged to be allowed to take down his deposition to the facts of the case. It must have been in this way that the story came to be included in Mrs. Catherine Crowe's remarkable book *The Night Side of Nature*. It appears there in a much curtailed form, omitting many of the phenomena here related. This, then, was the old man's tale:

When I was a youngster I entered as a cadet into the service of the Honourable East India Company, and set sail from Plymouth one fine morning in the good ship *Somerset*, with several other young fellows who were eastward bound on the same errand as myself. Those were stirring times, and many a vision of glory to be won on the battle-field floated before our youthful eyes. A merry company we were, for they were good fellows all—gay, light-hearted, and careless; and so with story, jest, and song we did our best to make the long hours of that tedious voyage pass as rapidly as we could.

One among my comrades had a peculiar attraction for me, perhaps because he alone of all the party seemed to have occasional fits of sadness—spells of serious thought, during which he withdrew into himself, and almost repelled the advances of his companions. He was a young Highlander named Cameron, handsome, dark, and tall, a well-read man, but one who shrank from displaying his knowledge; a man somewhat out of the ordinary run, one felt instinctively—a man, perhaps, with a history.

As I said, he had a peculiar attraction for me, and though he was reserved at first, we ultimately became firm friends; and in his more melancholy moods, when he avoided the society of others, he yet seemed to find a sort of passive pleasure in mine. At such times he would say but little, but would sit for an hour gazing steadily at the horizon, with a strange faraway look in his deep, earnest eyes. So would a man look (I often thought) whom some terrible sorrow, some ghastly

experience, had marked off for ever from the rest of his kind; but I asked no questions. I waited patiently till the time should come when our ripening friendship would reveal the secret.

One thing more I noticed; that whenever the conversation turned, as it did several times during the voyage, upon what is commonly called the supernatural (a subject upon which most of us were derisively sceptical, as was the fashion in those days) my friend not only expressed no opinion whatever, but invariably withdrew himself from the party or contrived to change the subject. No one else, however, appeared to notice this, and I said nothing about it.

Well, in due course we arrived at Madras, and, after staying there about a fortnight, five of us, including my friend Cameron and myself, received orders to join our regiment at an up-country station. Our party was under the charge of a certain Major Rivers, whom, during the short time we had known him, we had all learnt to like very much. He was a small, spare man, with short-sighted grey eyes and a peculiarly pleasant smile; a man of extreme punctuality in trifles, but frank, kindly, and genial; a thorough soldier and a thorough sportsman. Indeed, his devotion to sport had left its mark upon him in the shape of a very perceptible limp, the result of an accident in the hunting-field.

A considerable part of our journey had to be performed by water, so a kind of barge was put into requisition for us, and we started at day-break one morning. It soon grew insufferably hot, the country was flat, and our progress extremely slow, so you will not be surprised to hear that we found the time hang somewhat heavily upon our hands. Sometimes we got out and walked a few yards to stretch our legs, but the beat of the sun soon drove us under our awning again. By the evening of the second day we were in a state of *ennui* bordering on desperation, when the Major suddenly said with a smile:

“Gentlemen, I have a proposal to make.”

“Hear, hear!” we all shouted; “anything to vary this detestable monotony!”

“My idea,” said the Major, “is this. You see that little hill over there to the right? Well, I know this part of the country thoroughly, and I know that the river passes just on the other side of that hill. Now though it is, as you see, only a few miles off in a straight line, it is at least four times that distance by water, in consequence of the windings of the river. We are now about to stop for the night, and I thought that if we left the boat here to-morrow morning, arranging to meet it again in the evening at the base of that hill, we might relieve the tedium of the journey by a little shooting in those jungles, where I know from experience there is good sport to be had.”

Of course we hailed the suggestion with acclamation, and at an early hour the next morning we took our guns and leapt ashore, accompanied by a large dog which belonged to one of the party—a fine, intelligent animal, and a general favourite. The Major had created some amusement by appearing in an enormous pair of top-boots, many sizes too large for him; but when some one suggested that he seemed more prepared for fishing than shooting, he only laughed good-naturedly and said that before the day was over we might perhaps wish that we had been as well protected as he was. In sooth he was right, for we found the ground for some distance decidedly marshy, and in many places, to obtain a footing at all, we had to spring from bush to bush and stone to stone in a way that, encumbered as we were with our guns, soon made us most unpleasantly warm. At last our difficulties culminated in a muddy stream or ditch which looked about twelve feet broad.

“Rather a long jump for a man with a heavy gun!” I said.

“Oh,” replied the Major, “I think we can manage it; at any rate I am going to try, and if I get over with my game leg, it ought to be easy enough for you young fellows.”

He took a short run, and sprang, just clearing the ditch; but unluckily the slimy edge of the bank gave way under his feet, and he slipped back into the water. In a moment the rest of us took the leap, all getting safely across, and rushed to his assistance. He was quite unhurt, and, thanks to the enormous top-boots, not even wet; but his gun was choked with mud, and required a thorough cleaning. He threw himself down with a laugh under the nearest tree, and began fanning himself with his hat, saying:

“You will have to go on without me for awhile.”

We protested against leaving him, objecting that we did not know the country, and offered to stop and help him; but this he refused to permit.

“No, no,” he said, “you must push on, and see what you can find; I shall follow in half an hour or so. We cannot miss one another, and at the worst there is always the hill as a landmark, so you have only to climb a tree and you will get the direction at once. But in any case do not fail to be at the boat at five o’clock, for whether I overtake you in the meantime or not, *I promise you I will be there to meet you.*”

Somewhat reluctantly we obeyed, and plunged into the jungle, leaving him still lying fanning himself under the tree. We had walked on for about an hour without much success, and were just beginning to wonder when the Major would join us, when Cameron, who happened to be next to me, stopped suddenly, turned pale as death, and pointing straight before him cried in accents of horror:

“See! see! merciful heaven, look there!”

“Where? what? what is it?” we all shouted confusedly, as we rushed up to him and looked round in expectation of encountering a tiger, a cobra, we hardly knew what, but assuredly something terrible, since it had been sufficient to cause such evident emotion in our usually self-contained comrade. But neither tiger nor cobra was visible; nothing but Cameron, pointing with ghastly haggard face and starting eyeballs at *something we could not see.*

“Cameron! Cameron!” cried I, seizing his arm, “for heaven’s sake, speak! what is the matter?”

Scarcely were the words out of my mouth when a low but very peculiar sound struck on my ear, and Cameron, dropping his pointing hand, said in a hoarse strained voice:

“There! you heard it? Thank God it’s over!”

Even as he spoke he fell to the ground insensible. There was a momentary confusion while we unfastened his collar, and I dashed in his face some water which I fortunately had in my flask, while another tried to pour brandy between his clenched teeth; and under cover of it I whispered to the man next me (one of our greatest sceptics, by the way):

“Beauchamp, did *you* hear anything?”

“Why, yes,” he replied, “a curious sound, very; a sort of crash or rattle far away in the distance, yet very distinct; if the thing were not utterly impossible I could have sworn it was the rattle of musketry.”

“Just my impression,” murmured I; “but hush; he is recovering.”

In a minute or two he was able to speak feebly, and began to thank us and apologize for giving trouble; and soon he sat up, leaning against a tree, and in a firm though still low voice said

“My dear friends, I feel I owe you an explanation of my extraordinary behaviour. It is an explanation that I would fain avoid giving; but it must come some time, and so may as well be given now.

“You may perhaps have noticed that when during the voyage you all joined in scoffing at dreams, portents, and visions, I invariably avoided giving any opinion on the subject. I did so because, while I had no desire to court ridicule or provoke discussion, I was unable to agree with

you, knowing only too well from my own dread experience that the world which men agree to call that of the supernatural is just as real as this world we see about us—perhaps even far more so. In other words, I, like many of my countrymen, am cursed with the gift of second-sight—that awful faculty which foretells in vision calamities that are shortly to occur.

“Such a vision I had just now, and its exceptional horror moved me as you have seen. I saw before me a corpse—not that of one who has died a peaceful, natural death, but that of the victim of some terrible accident—a ghastly, shapeless mass, with a face swollen, crushed, unrecognisable. I saw this dreadful object placed in a coffin, and the funeral service performed over it; I saw the burial-ground, I saw the clergyman; and though I had never seen either before, I can picture both perfectly in my mind’s eye now. I saw you, myself, Beauchamp, all of us and many more, standing round as mourners; I saw the soldiers raise their muskets after the service was over; I heard the volley they fired—and then I knew no more.”

As he spoke of that volley of musketry I glanced across with a shudder at Beauchamp, and the look of stony horror on that handsome sceptic’s face was one not to be forgotten. The spell of the vision was upon us all, and no one liked to be the first to speak; and for a long minute, which could be felt—that silence of tropical noon which is so far deeper than that of perhaps two minutes, there was a silence midnight.

And then—it was broken. Broken, not by any of the ordinary sounds of the forest, but by one which under the circumstances startled us far more than the growl of the tiger or the hiss of the serpent would have done—the deep solemn ‘clang!’ of a great church-bell.

“Good God, what is that?” cried Beauchamp, thoroughly unnerved, as we all sprang to our feet, while the dog threw up his head and howled.

“It’s the bell tolling for that funeral of Cameron’s,” said Granville, the wit of our party, trying to smile with a very white face; but I doubt if ever a joke fell flatter, for we were in no mood for laughter. While we still stood awe-stricken, gazing at one another, again the unmistakable sonorous ‘clang!’ rang out in our ears—not borne by the wind and mellowed by distance, but in the very midst of us, close over our heads—so close that we felt the ground vibrate in response to its stroke.

“Let us leave this accursed spot!” cried I, seizing Cameron’s arm. Beauchamp caught him by the other, and between us we half supported, half dragged him along. The others followed; but we had not gone ten yards before that hollow knell sounded once more in our midst, adding wings to our speed; and again the dog howled dismally.

Nothing else happened, however, and for a mile or more we hurried along in silence, until we came upon a beautiful grassy dell through which meandered a clear silvery streamlet. On its edge we threw ourselves down to rest; indeed Cameron, not yet thoroughly recovered, seemed incapable of going further. After a long draught of the cool water we became more composed, and began seriously to review our late remarkable experience.

As to Cameron’s vision, after witnessing his intense and painful agitation it was impossible to doubt that it was sufficiently real to *him*, and (the phenomenon being a purely subjective one) there was little more to be said. More difficult to deal with was the faint, distant, yet surprisingly distinct sound of a volley of musketry which Beauchamp and I had both heard. Granville in our heated imagination, excited as we and Johnson, who had heard nothing, declared that the sound had existed only naturally were by Cameron’s strange condition; and, when reminded of its singular agreement with the termination of his vision, attributed that fact to mere coincidence.

Neither Beauchamp nor I were at all satisfied with this; *we* had heard the sound, and we *knew* that this theory was not the true explanation; but as we were entirely unable to suggest a more

rational one, it was useless to argue. But then that weird church-bell! No one dreamt of suggesting imagination in that case; we had all alike heard it—all felt the vibration of the earth which it caused—all agreed exactly in the description of its sound, and in locating it in the very midst of us.

“Still,” said Granville, “of course there *must* be some means of accounting for it naturally. Even if there were such things as spirits, it would be absurd to suppose them capable of producing a noise such as that. I have read of cases in which some unusual description of echo has been found capable of reproducing a sound with startling fidelity even at an almost incredible distance.”

“An echo!” replied Cameron scornfully; “there is not a church-bell within fifty miles of us—not such an one as that, probably, in the whole of India, for it sounded like the Great Bell of Moscow.”

“Yes, that sound had certainly not travelled fifty miles,” remarked Beauchamp reflectively. “You have heard, I suppose, of the *campanero* of South America?”

We had all read of this lovely bird and its wonderful bell-like note, but we had no reason to believe that any such creature existed in India; besides, we all agreed that no specimen of the feathered tribe was ever hatched which could have produced that tremendous metallic clang.

“I wish the Major had been with us,” said Granville; “he knows the country, and perhaps he might be able to suggest something. Ha! I have it! I see the explanation of the mystery! How absurd of us not to have thought of it before! Of course the Major, who stayed behind, has been playing some trick upon us, and is now having a good laugh somewhere or other at the recollection of our foolish fright!”

“A bright idea! that must be it!” exclaimed Beauchamp and Johnson together.

“But stay,” interposed I, “*how* could he have done it? He can hardly have been carrying a bell weighing two or three tons or so in his coat-pocket.”

“Oh, no doubt he found some method or other,” answered Granville; “for example, I have heard that a properly prepared bar of iron will when struck give out a very fair imitation of a bell sound.”

“Perhaps so, but then properly prepared bars of iron are not usually to be found lying about in an Indian jungle, and he certainly brought nothing with him from the boat.”

“Well, possibly the barrel of his gun might be made—” but here a general smile checked the speaker, and Cameron quietly remarked:

“No, Granville, I do not think that will quite answer as an explanation; besides, how do you account for the sound coming from a point close above our heads?”

“Much may be done by skilful management of ventriloquism,” replied Granville.

“Ventriloquism! my dear fellow, can you seriously suppose that such a sound as that ever proceeded from any human throat?”

“Well,” answered Granville, “I cannot say; but until you can find me a better, I cling to my hypothesis that the Major is responsible for our fright in some way or other.”

To this Beauchamp and Johnson somewhat hesitatingly agreed; Cameron smiled sadly and shook his head, but said no more; as for myself, I knew not what to think, for my scepticism was considerably shaken by the strange events of the morning.

We lay there by that pleasant stream for some hours, each ransacking his memory in turn for some half-forgotten story of the supernatural, of goblin, ghost, or fairy, told perhaps by some old nurse in happy childish days. The only tale that dwells in my recollection is a short one told by Cameron in answer to a question as to his first experience of the faculty of second-sight.

“The first experience I well remember,” he said; “I was a little lad of six or seven, and one evening when my father and I were out walking together, we stood to watch the fishermen of our little village push off their boats and start for their night’s work. Among them were two fine lads, Alec and Donald, who were particular favourites of mine, and used frequently to bring strange fish for “the little laird” (as they called me) to see; and once I had even been out in their boat. So I waved my hand to them as they set sail, and then we continued our ramble, ascending the cliffs so that we could watch the boats as they stood far out to sea.

“We were nearly at home again, when, coming round an angle of the grey old castle wall, I was much surprised to see Alec and Donald leaning against it. I was about to speak to them, when the sudden tightening of my father’s grasp upon my hand caused me to look up in his face, and the stern, set expression that I saw there diverted my attention for the moment from the lads, though I noticed that they did not give us the customary salute—in fact, did not seem to see us at all.

“ ‘Father,’ I asked, ‘what can Alec and Donald be doing there?’

“He looked down on me with deep compassion, and said:

“ ‘And did ye see them too? Eh! my lad, my lad!’

“After that he took no notice of my questions, and spoke no more till we reached home. He retired to his room, while I ran down to the beach to see why my young friends’ boat had returned; but to my astonishment there was no boat there, and an old woman, who had been sitting spinning at her door close by the whole time, assured me that there certainly had been none since the whole fleet set sail together two hours before. I was puzzled, but still I never doubted that somehow my friends had been there in real flesh and blood; even the great storm which woke me in the night suggested nothing, and it was only when in the early morning I saw men reverently bearing two bodies into the house where Alec and Donald had lived, that I had any idea of the true nature of what I had seen.”

Thus time passed on, till the declining rays of the sun warned us that we must think of returning to the boat. We had not far to go, for the hill at whose foot we were to meet was full in sight, and we had only to pass through a wood which skirted its base. By this time we had somewhat recovered our normal tone, and were laughing and chatting gaily, wondering where we should find the Major, and thinking what an incredible story we had to tell him. Beauchamp, who was leading, called out:

“Here is the end of the wood at last!”

Suddenly his dog, which had been roaming about in advance, came flying back and cowered down among us with every sign of excessive fear. We had no time to wonder at this unusual behaviour before again in our midst sounded that solemn sonorous ‘clang!’ just as before, and again the trembling dog threw up his head and howled.

“Ha!” exclaiming Cameron, quickly turning upon Granville; “echo? ventriloquism? an iron bar? a musket-barrel? which hypothesis do you prefer now?”

And as his voice ceased the dread unearthly knell again crashed forth. With one consent we sprang towards the open ground at the end of the wood, but before we could reach it the spectral bell rang once more in our very ears—almost in our very brains, as it seemed—amid the frantic howls of the dog. We rushed out in great disorder into the broad meadow sloping down to the river, and it was with an unutterable sense of relief that we saw our boat, already moored, waiting to receive us, and the Major some distance in front of us limping hastily towards it.

“Major! Major!” we shouted.

But he did not turn his head, sharp though his ears were generally; he only hurried on towards the boat, so we all started in pursuit, running as hard as we could. To our surprise the dog, instead of accompanying us, uttered one final dismal yelp and dashed back into the haunted wood; but no one thought of following him, for our attention was fixed on the Major. Fast as we ran we were unable to overtake him, and we were still some fifty yards from the boat when he hurried across the plank that the boatmen had just put down as a gangway. He went down the stairs, still in the same hurried manner, and we rushed after him, but to our intense surprise were unable to find him anywhere. The door of his cabin stood wide open, but it was empty; and though we searched the whole barge, not a trace of him could we find.

“Well,” cried Granville, “this is the strangest trick of all.”

Cameron and I exchanged glances, but Granville, not observing us, rushed on deck and demanded of the head boatman where the Major was.

“Sahib,” replied the man, “I have not seen him since he left with you this morning.”

“Why, what do you mean?” roared Granville; “he came on board this barge not a minute before we did, and I saw you put down a plank for him to cross with your own hands!”

“Sir,” answered the man, exhibiting the greatest astonishment, “you certainly mistake; you were yourself the first person to come on board, and I laid down the plank because I saw you coming; as for the Major Sahib, I have not set eyes upon him since morning.”

We could do nothing but stare at one another in blank amazement, not unmingled with awe; and I heard Cameron mutter as if to himself:

“He *is* dead, then, as I feared, and the vision was for him after all.”

“There is something very strange about all this,” said Beauchamp, “something which I cannot at all understand; but one thing is clear. We must at once go back to the place where we left the Major this morning, and search for him. Some accident may have happened.”

We explained to the head boatman where we had parted from the Major, and found that he at once shared our worst fears.

“That is a very dangerous place, Sahib,” he said; “there was once a village there, and there are two or three deep wells whose mouths are entirely over-grown by bushes and weeds; and the Major Sahib, being so short-sighted, would be very likely to fall into one of them.”

This intelligence naturally increased our apprehensions tenfold, and we lost no time in setting off, taking with us three of the boatmen and a coil of stout rope. As may be imagined, it was not without a shudder that we plunged again into the wood where we had heard those mysterious sounds which we had now so much reason to fear might have been in some inexplicable way intended as warnings to us of a calamity impending, or perhaps even then taking place. But the conversation turned chiefly on the latest marvel—the appearance and disappearance of what we could hardly help calling the Major’s ghost.

We carefully compared notes, and ascertained beyond a doubt that all five of us had clearly seen him. We had all observed his hurried manner; we had all noticed that, though still wearing the top-boots, he had no hat upon his head and was no longer carrying his gun; we had all seen him descend the stairs on board the boat, and we were all perfectly certain that it would have been impossible for him, if a man in the flesh, to escape us unobserved. Sceptics though some of us had been as to supernatural visitations, I think none of us now ventured to hope that we should find him alive; and perhaps it is no discredit to our prowess as soldiers to confess that we kept very close together as we retraced our steps through those woods, and that we spoke chiefly in whispers, except when at intervals we stopped, let off our pieces, and all shouted together, so that

if the Major were lying disabled anywhere in the neighbourhood he would be aware of our approach.

However, we met with nothing unusual on our way, and found without difficulty the place where we had crossed the ditch, and the tree under which we had left the Major. From this spot the boatmen easily tracked his footsteps for a few hundred yards, till one of them, running forward, picked up the hat and gun of the missing man—"the very articles," whispered Cameron to me, "which he had not when we saw him just now." We now felt certain that some terrible accident had occurred—probably close to the very spot where we stood; and sure enough the natives pointed out to us only a few yards off the concealed mouth of one of those old wells of which they had warned us. Alas! at its edge there were the unmistakable marks of slipping feet; and from the blackness of the depth into which we looked, we could hardly doubt that our poor friend must have been fatally injured, even if not at once killed, by the fall.

The sun was already setting, and night comes on so rapidly in the tropics that we had but little time to lose; so, as no answer came to our shouts, we hastily passed our rope round the branch of a tree which hung over the mouth of the well, and by its means one of the boatmen descended. Soon from an immense depth a shout came up; the man had reached the bottom, and had discovered a body, but was unable to tell us whether it was the Major's or not. We directed him to attach it to the rope, and with fast-beating hearts drew it to the surface of the earth.

Never shall I forget the ghastly sight that met our eyes in the rapidly-fading light. The corpse was indeed the Major's, but it was only by the clothes and the top-boots that we could identify it; scarcely anything of human shape was left in it, and the face was swollen and crushed past all recognition, as Cameron had seen it in his vision. Death must have been instantaneous, for evidently as he fell down the well, the head must have struck more than once against the rough rocky projections which we could see as we peered into it. Horrible to relate, entangled in the rope which had been so hurriedly tied round the corpse was also the mangled, but yet warm and palpitating body of *Beauchamp's* dog, which had rushed so madly into the jungle but an hour before! Sick with horror, we twined together a rude litter of branches, laid the Major's remains upon it with averted eyes, and bore it silently back to our boat.

So ends my gruesome story, and few will wonder that a permanent effect was produced upon the life of each one of its witnesses. Since then I have borne my part in many a battle-field, and faced death calmly enough in its most dreadful forms (for familiarity breeds contempt); but yet there are times when that unearthly bell, that spectral figure, that awful corpse rise once more before my mind, and a great horror falls upon me, and I dread to be alone.

One more fact I ought to mention to make my tale complete. When, on the following evening, we arrived at our destination, and our melancholy deposition had been taken down by the proper authorities, Cameron and I went out for a quiet walk, to endeavour with the assistance of the soothing influence of nature to shake off something of the gloom which paralysed our spirits. Suddenly he clutched my arm, and pointing through some rude railings, said in a trembling voice:

"Yes, there it is! that is the burial-ground I saw yesterday."

And when later on we were introduced to the chaplain of the post, I noticed, though my friends did not, the irrepressible shudder with which Cameron took his hand, and I knew that he had recognised the clergyman of his vision.

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Such is my great-grandfather's story. As for its occult rationale, I presume Cameron's vision to have been a pure case of second-sight, and if so, the fact that the two men who were evidently nearest to him (certainly one and probably both actually *touching* him) participated in it to the limited extent of hearing the concluding volley, while the others who were not so close did not, would show that the intensity with which the vision impressed itself upon the seer occasioned a disturbance in his aura which was communicated to that of each person in contact with him, as in ordinary thought-transference.

The bell sounds seem to have been an exceedingly powerful manifestation, probably produced by the dead Major, as an attempt to apprise his friends of the accident which had befallen him. It frequently happens that a dead man, unaccustomed to his new surroundings and unacquainted with the methods of wielding super-physical forces, plunges wildly about in his desperate efforts to communicate somehow with the world that he has left, and in doing so produces results as unexpected to himself as to his friends on earth. I have not heard of another instance of their taking exactly this form, but I have heard of others quite as tremendous; so I agree with Granville in holding the Major responsible for that weird signal, though I do not know exactly how he caused it.

From what we hear of the Major's extreme punctuality, it is probable that the idea of keeping his promise to reach the boat at the time arranged may have been prominent in his mind immediately before death, and that prominent idea is enough to account for the apparition. The fact that the officers all saw it, and the boatmen did not, might be attributed to the intense excitement under which the former were laboring, in addition to the fact that they, as constant companions, would be much more *en rapport* with the deceased. The dog, as often happens, realised the character of the appearance sooner than the men did; but perhaps the most extraordinary point of the whole story is the discovery of its body along with the Major's. I can only suppose that in an additional attempt to turn the attention of his friends in the right direction, the Major may have drawn *it* back to the scene of the accident, though he could not draw *them*, and being unable to check itself in its headlong rush, it met with its death as he had done; but I offer this only as a conjecture.