

TRANCES.

HOW THEY MAY BE INDUCED.

About a fortnight ago, I was driving through Hooghly Bazaar (writes Dr. Esdaile, from the neighborhood of Calcutta) and saw a crowd collected before the police office. On asking what was the matter, I was told that a man had been apprehended in the act of stealing a boy, and that the parties were inside the guard-house. Upon hearing this, I entered the house, and found a boy of ten or twelve years old, sitting on the lap of a man who was said to have rescued him. The boy was half stupid, and one of his eyes was swollen; I therefore ordered him to be taken to the hospital. The culprit was then shown to me. He said he was a barber; and a bundle containing his implements of trade, was produced; this I carefully examined, but only found the usual barber's tools. The boy soon recovered his senses, and told me, readily and consistently, the following tale, which I again heard him repeat before the magistrate, in a different sequence, but without a tittle of variation. He said, that early in the morning he went into a field close to a house, and that shortly after, a strange man left the road, and came up to him; as soon as he was near him, he began to mutter charms, and then took hold of his hand; very soon after, he passed his hand across his eyes, and that thereupon he lost his senses, and only recollected that the man led him away, but without force, and that he felt compelled to follow him. When he came to his senses, it was at the gate of Chanderuagore, two miles from where he had met the man: and this was all he had to say. He had not eaten, drunk, or smoked, in company with the man; and his master and friends all said he was a clever, well-behaved boy, and had never been known to have fits, or walk in his sleep. I then examined the man who was said to have rescued him; his evidence was to this effect. that on the morning in question, he saw the boy, whom he knew very well, following a strange man; that he stopped him, and asked what he was doing there? The boy made no answer, and appeared to be idiotic; upon seeing this, he became alarmed, brought water to throw on his face, and used other means to revive him, in which he at last succeeded. On again questioning him, he said that he did not know why he was there; that he was obliged to follow that man, though he did not know him, and after saying this, he fell down, and bruised his eye on the ground. In the mean time, the man was making off, but was apprehended, and brought to Hooghly. I then called in the barber, and this was his story: he met the boy on the road crying and looking stupid, and on asking him what ailed him he said that he had lost his way. Upon hearing this, he desired the boy to accompany him to the police station, and that a policeman would take him home. The strange nature of the transaction, whichever side was true, strongly arrested my attention, and the trade of the man roused my suspicions; as I had heard that barbers in this country, while performing their tedious processes, could put people to sleep; and reports are rife, all over the country, of people having been obliged to follow persons who had charmed them; and the victims are said to be usually women. The barbers, all over the world, are a shrewd, observing race; their occupation brings them into close contact with the surfaces most sensitive to the mesmeric influence; and they are, therefore, very likely to have become possessed of the secret of Mesmerism at an early period, and perhaps it has descended to them as a mystery of their craft. I could only see two roads out of the dilemma: it was either a case of natural, or

artificial somnambulism; and if the latter, how could it be brought about unless by Mesmerism? As accident had made me a witness in the case, I anticipated that I should be called upon to speak as to the possibility of such a mode of abduction; and as I was completely ignorant of the subject, I determined to make experiments to satisfy myself. I thought it probable, that if this could be done by Mesmerism, I should perhaps be able to imitate it, as the greater power includes the less; and that I had only to stop short in the progress to insensibility, in order to produce like effects, if obtainable by this means.

I therefore repaired to the Jail Hospital, and mesmerised a man; in whom I had subdued inflammation of the eye, by entrancing him several times; but only went to the extent of inducing the cataleptic tendency, and leaving him the power of moving and hearing, but very imperfectly. At this point, I led him away, and then letting him go, he stalked to the other end of the enclosure, till brought up by the wall; being turned, he walked in a straight line till some obstacle obstructed him, and then stood helplessly still. If allowed to stand motionless for some minutes, the trance deepened, and he became insensible to sounds; by blowing in his eyes, and addressing him all the time, he revived, and repeated after me, with great exactness, both English and Hindostanee; on awakening him, he had no recollection of any part of his proceedings, and said that he had never stirred from the spot, although he was at the opposite end of the enclosure from where we commenced. Being summoned to the Magistrate's Court as a witness, I was asked, "if I thought it practicable to carry off a person in the way described in the evidence?" I replied, that "I thought it possible, because I had just done something very like it, by making a prisoner follow me round the hospital enclosure, without his knowing it." The magistrate committed the case; but when it came to be tried before the judge, it was found to be utterly impossible to convey even a glimpse of my meaning in the minds of the native law officers who had to try the case; and the judge therefore asked me if I had any objection to show the Moulavies in court that it was possible for one person to make another follow him involuntarily, as I said. I answered, that I was willing to make the experiment, but would engage to do nothing if he would order three men, whom I named, to be sent for to Court, I would try what could be done,—the men to be kept in total ignorance of our intentions.

In a day or two after, I was requested to attend the judge's court, which was crowded with Europeans and natives. Nazir Mahomed was brought in, and placed at the bar: I mesmerised him in a few minutes, and led him, with his arms catalepted, out of the court, and set him walking down the road for some distance, making his arms rigid in any position, as long as I pleased. I then replaced him at the bar, where the judge and Moulavies all loudly addressed him, without his paying any attention to them; and they were obliged to ask me to awake him. This I did, and on being asked from the bench, if he had left the room since he first entered it, he confidently answered, "No." While they were speaking to him in front, I approached, unperceived, behind, and entranced him on the spot, in the act of speaking. The words died on his lips, and he became insensible to all voices that addressed him; he was again awake by blowing in his eyes. Madub was put in the dock, and he did not see me on entering. The judge and Moulavies engaged him in conversation, and while he was speaking with animation and intelligence, I catalepted him from behind, while in the usual praying attitude of a prisoner at the bar, and, in a moment, he