



*Excerpt*

# Healing without Medicine

## *From Pioneers to Modern Practice*

How Millions Have Been Healed by the Power of the Mind Alone

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### **Taken from Chapter One: Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, Father of the New Thought Movement**

The contemporary practical philosophical movement called New Thought and the so-called Metaphysical Movement in America started with Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, who is regarded as the father of the New Thought movement on the American continent. Quimby was born on February 16, 1802, in Lebanon, New Hampshire. He was a clockmaker's apprentice and inventor in New England who attended school for a short period of time; according to Willa Cather and Georgine Milmine, Quimby "spent actually only six weeks in school."<sup>1</sup> He was indeed a self-made man with an inquiring and inventive mind.

Quimby contracted pulmonary tuberculosis at young age, and his liver and kidneys deteriorated as a result of excessive harmful medicine. As a result he abandoned his business as a clockmaker and retired to his farm expecting to die. Quimby became disillusioned with the medical treatment and gave up any hope of recovery. The following is Quimby's own description of his health condition, written around 1863:

Some thirty years ago I was very sick, and was considered fast wasting away with consumption [tuberculosis]. At that time I became so low that it was with difficulty I could walk about (sic). I was all the while under the allopathic practice, and I had taken so much *calomel* that my system was said to be poisoned with it; and I lost many of my teeth from that effect. My symptoms were those of any consumptive; and I had been told that my liver was affected and my kidneys were diseased, and that my lungs were nearly consumed. I believed all this, from the fact that I had all the symptoms, and could not resist the opinions of the physician while having the proof with me. In this state I was compelled to abandon my business; and, losing all hope, I gave up to die, — not that I thought the medical faculty

had no wisdom, but that my case was one that could not be cured.<sup>ii</sup> (The bolded italics are mine)

Several important elements played a key role in Quimby's life that led him to develop his ideas on mental healing. According to Quimby's diary, his doctor prescribed him *calomel*, which is toxic liquid, mercury. Paradoxically, the remedy that Quimby was taking instead of curing him, was killing him, as he later realized. *Calomel* was used in America as a purgative to cure several maladies, especially yellow fever, during the Civil War to early twentieth century.<sup>iii</sup> Taken in great quantities has severe side effects such as loss of teeth and hair similar to Quimby's case. Thus, the simple fact that Quimby discontinued ingesting this harmful medication, Calomel, was in itself a positive step toward regaining his health.

However, there were other milestones that played important role in Quimby's regaining his wellness. One is when he found out that one of his friends had cured himself by doing outdoor physical activities, which included horseback riding. Quimby attempted to emulate his friend although his severe physical ailments prevented him from trying horseback riding; instead, Quimby tried carriage trips. One day while he was riding in his carriage, the horse stopped and refused to move; therefore, he opted to walk alongside the horse. Suddenly, to his surprise, he found himself walking uphill about two miles by the horse's side.<sup>iv</sup> This incident appeared to produce a remarkable impact on his recovery.

The second milestone was when he became acquainted with mesmerism. Dr. Charles Poyen came to America from France to give demonstrations of mesmerism around 1838. Quimby became very interested in the theory of animal magnetism and saw in mesmerism an alternative way to regain his health; therefore, he earnestly devoted time to learning the "nuts and bolts" of this new "science." Quimby, having a very inquisitive mind, quickly learned the mesmeric method of healing. Soon afterwards, he felt capable of practicing mesmerism on his own, and began giving public demonstrations on mesmerism in New England, although he was still sick with pulmonary tuberculosis.

In 1840, Quimby met a young lad named Lucius Burkmar during a public demonstration of mesmerism. This encounter was the turning point in Quimby's life, as we will demonstrate. Lucius was a very suggestible boy, who easily fell into a trance under the direction of Quimby. They formed a partnership and together gave the most remarkable exhibitions of mesmerism and clairvoyance in New England that can be verified in the newspapers of that time.<sup>v</sup> The procedure was as follows: Quimby would put Lucius into a mesmeric state (or state of trance) with the purpose of examining the patient's illness clairvoyantly. Lucius would diagnose the patient's disease and its location in the

body, and finally, he would prescribe the remedies for the cure. In most of the cases, the patient's health was restored.

Thus, Lucius was very instrumental and helpful for Quimby's psychic demonstrations. However, contrary to the common opinion held in the New Thought movement, initially, Lucius was the one who was doing the healing. He was the one who was diagnosing the illness and prescribing the remedy to the patient. Quimby's role was limited to induce Lucius into a trance (Alpha) state of mind.

At some point the following question most likely crossed Quimby's mind; if Lucius could read the mind of people and clairvoyantly diagnose the illness of the patients, he could do the same thing regarding his own malady. Quimby was diagnosed with a terminal disease; in his own words, he was expecting to die in the near future. Thus, if Quimby wanted to continue doing public demonstrations on Mesmerism, he had to take care of his own health first. Lucius was healing other people, so why not test Lucius' method on himself? Consequently, Quimby, with some reservation, inquired Lucius about his medical condition.

Here is the beginning of the development of Quimby's healing philosophy. Quimby asked Lucius to clairvoyantly scan his kidneys and liver, which were seriously infected. Lucius agreed to do that. Once the examination was made, Lucius announced that Quimby's kidneys were disintegrating, and that he could put them together. Lucius was subsequently prompted to lay his hands on Quimby infected area; while he was doing this, he told Quimby that he was putting his kidneys back together. A few days later, Quimby had Lucius examine him clairvoyantly again; at this point, Lucius declared that Quimby's kidneys were completely restored to health. Surprisingly, Quimby felt asymptomatic and did not have any more pain. This incident was the decisive moment for Quimby concerning his view of conventional medicine; he started doubting the accuracy of his medical diagnosis. In the above quotation, Quimby himself stated that the physicians diagnosed him with a terminal disease, and he had given up all hope of regaining his health. However, after Lucius' treatment, his health was restored. I firmly belief that one of the reasons for Quimby's feeling much better was the fact that he discontinued taking Calomel (mercury); although, he was completely unaware of the connection.

Quimby had his own reservations about his healing; first, he was diagnosed by the medical profession as having a terminal disease, and second, how had an inexperienced and ignorant lad cured him by laying his hands on him? Lucius was a simple boy having no healing power; how would he have healed him? Analyzing these questions, he came to the conclusion that the medical diagnosis was probably wrong. Furthermore, Quimby hypothesized that what Lucius was doing when he was in trance was intuitively reading the mind of the patient, rather than clairvoyantly examining him.

Quimby started thinking that he might heal himself; however, he did not have much evidence to confirm that idea at this point.

After this incident, another important event took place that gave Quimby the idea for the development of his future treatment method. During a public healing demonstration, Lucius prescribed some expensive medicine to a patient who was unable to afford it. Quimby mesmerized Lucius again and asked him for another prescription; Lucius changed his prescription to a cheaper one, and the medication had the same healing effect. At this point, for Quimby, the case was crystal clear, that no matter what kind of medicine Lucius prescribed, it would have the same effect if the patient believed in it. This theory, later developed by Émile Coué, is now known as the *placebo effect*.

In order to determine Lucius's clairvoyant abilities, Quimby induced the lad into a trance using the hypnotic method. Quimby found out that Lucius accepted as true the suggestions given while in trance. These experiments convinced Quimby conclusively that Lucius, during his clairvoyant examination, was reading the minds of the patients rather than clairvoyantly seeing the illness. Therefore, he discovered that a stronger mind acts directly upon another's mind; then he realized that the prescriptions given by Lucius were effective *suggestions* to the patients as long as they believed in them. In other words, even if the "remedy" prescribed did not have any curative value, the healing would take place anyway because of the patient **believed** on the prescription. Here we have another case of the placebo effect in action. Quimby concluded "Diseases are embraced in our belief."

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<sup>i</sup> Willa Cather & Georgina Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy & The History of Christian Science* (University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>ii</sup> Horatio W. Dresser, *The Quimby Manuscript, Showing the Discovery of Spiritual Healing and the Origin of Christian Science* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1921).

<sup>iii</sup> Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, accessed August 2, 2011, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury\(I\)\\_chloride](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury(I)_chloride). See also the interesting article entitled *Heavy Metal Medicine*, at <http://pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/tcaw/10/i01/html/01chemch.html>.

<sup>iv</sup> Horatio W. Dresser, *The Quimby Manuscript*, op. cit.

<sup>v</sup> Also refer to the books of Annetta G. Dresser, *The Philosophy of P.P. Quimby*, and Horatio Dresser, *A History of the New Thought Movement*.