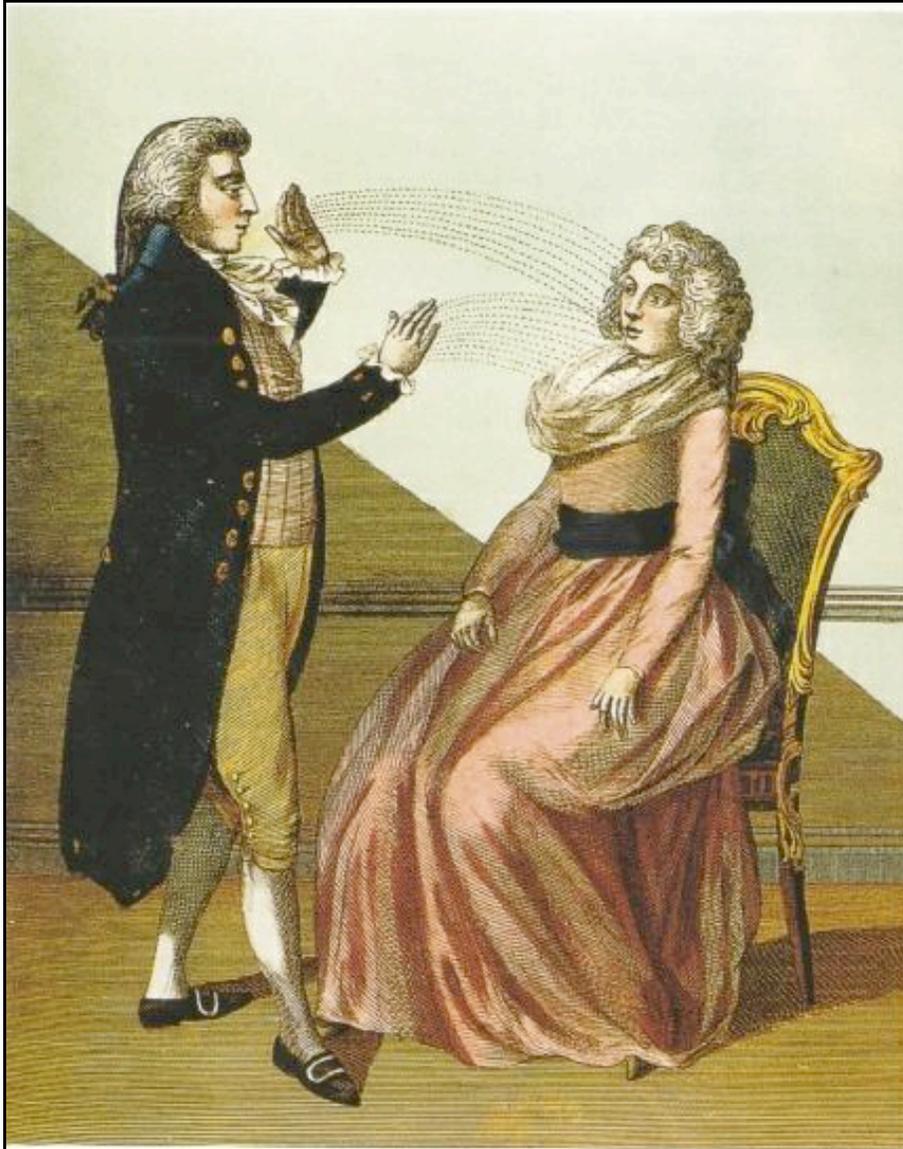


Chapter Two: Animal Magnetism and Charles Poyen



[An eighteenth century mesmeric practitioner]

In the seventeen centuries after the beginning of the Christian era, healers of all types had existed, almost all of which today are little recognized; their names include the Irish healer Valentine Greatrakes, Catholic priest and healer Johann Gassner, Paracelsus, and a host of others.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) differed from his predecessors in that he attempted to come up with a scientific theory to explain the phenomena he was observing, which theory he came to call “animal magnetism” but in later years would eventually be named after him, mesmerism. His theory posited an invisible fluid that existed throughout the universe and among people, which fluid could be transferred to those who are sick to help relieve or even cure them. Many excellent studies exist of the details of his life, his battling with detractors, the commission chaired by Benjamin Franklin in France in 1784 to evaluate his claims (they came to a negative conclusion), and his later years, but for the purposes of this book, his most lasting discovery was one that meant little to him but was championed by his follower Marquis de Puységur (1751-1825), the magnetic sleep or trance, commonly called somnambulism.¹

While Puységur generally considered himself a follower of Mesmer, he differed from him in a couple of important ways. While Mesmer believed that the healing power of animal magnetism necessarily included violent convulsions and spasms, Puységur decried that belief. Also he focused on the power of the trance state, which was called somnambulism due to its similarity to the phenomenon of sleep walking. He noted that while in the magnetic sleep, as it was also called, the patient would not remember what was said or done while in that state, but would at times have seeming clairvoyant or other amazing mental powers that could not otherwise be explained. During this trance state, the patient would be “en rapport” with the magnetizer, or “operator,” so that the patient could be influenced without his or her later recollection. One of the most significant powers was the apparent ability to diagnose the diseases and ailments of others and then prescribe medicines, even if the patient was not educated to know such terminology.

A study of the history of mesmerism necessarily includes the countless accounts of clairvoyance or other otherwise unexplainable mental phenomena that in the literature of the day are described in great detail. At this point, I believe it is worthwhile to second Adam Crabtree’s opening comments in his excellent work, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*:

In modern textbooks of psychology and psychiatry, too often the tradition of magnetic sleep is written off as a combination of clever charlatanism and naive credulity. The authorities quoted to substantiate this opinion are writers who have almost no firsthand knowledge of the literature of animal magnetism and the events and circumstances of its evolution. It is one of those strange quirks of academic historiography that a medico-psychological tradition that was investigated and used by practitioners in every country in the western world for one hundred years before Freud came onto the scene, a tradition that found supporters among the most brilliant researchers and thinkers during that period and produced thousands of medical treatises describing tens of thousands of cures and ameliorations, a tradition that counted among its offshoots a practicable surgical anesthesia and an effective system of psychotherapy, could be dismissed with a few cursory paragraphs. Whatever may be the explanation for this lacuna in the knowledge of our psychological roots, it is time to remedy the situation. That is the purpose of this book. . . .²

Crabtree continued on the same page and the next on the evolution of animal magnetism as a prospective healing agent, and then touched on a subject that he and only a few other researchers have explored, whether the “hypnotism” of James Braid—who is largely credited with making respectable the many speculative theories and observations of the early animal magnetism

practitioners and theorists under the name “hypnotism”—in fact whitewashed the early research by rather categorically denying the observations and research of his competitors. Thus while hypnotism is routinely called the modern day term for animal magnetism or mesmerism, that was still a debated point in the late nineteenth century, where some argued that in fact animal magnetism differed not insignificantly from hypnotism. Crabtree wrote:

Mesmer's theory held that a physical agent (magnetic fluid) produced the cures and ameliorations attributed to animal magnetism, but for most practitioners magnetic sleep also held a central role in the healing process. Magnetic somnambulism was employed to diagnose illnesses and prescribe cures. From the earliest times, the magnetic somnambulist was believed to have the ability to read the magnetizer's thoughts and to perceive by clairvoyance hidden objects and see into the body of the ill person. This capacity was accepted by most animal magnetizers but rejected by some. Among the skeptics was the Manchester physician James Braid, who developed an alternative theory to explain the trance and healing phenomena of animal magnetism. He believed that they resulted from a special state of consciousness produced through purely psychological means. He called this state “hypnotism” and used his theory to explain away the paranormal phenomena reported by the magnetists.³

Later in his book Crabtree explored this subject at great length, as when he wrote:

Particularly from 1880 on, the question of the reality of animal magnetism as distinct from hypnotism was seriously debated. Many denied the existence of animal-magnetic phenomena outright. Others found some of the phenomena credible and identified them with hypnotic phenomena. Still others believed that animal magnetism dealt with a life force that could be controlled and used in healing. The debate centered around the issue of action at a distance. Can a magnetizer induce somnambulism or cause healing at a distance? Can a somnambulist perceive thoughts, feelings, or objects at a distance without the use of the senses? In other words, does animal magnetism produce distant effects by means of some quasi-physical influence, or are all magnetic phenomena merely the result of suggestion and imagination? Because the problem was phrased in these terms, it was viewed by many as an issue of psychical research.⁴

Examples of early researchers in this debate who more or less concluded that a difference did in fact exist were Albert Moll, Thomas Jay Hudson, and Frederick Myer. Of Hudson he wrote:

Hudson posed the question about mesmerism versus hypnotism in provocative terms. He asked why the peculiar effects so commonly reported by mesmerists—the ‘higher phenomena,’ such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and distant healing—were more or less absent in the experiments of hypnotists. In answering he noted that the higher phenomena first showed signs of “decadence” when James Braid came on the scene, since Braid was determined to explain away the higher phenomena at all costs.⁵ Hudson accepted the basic facts adduced by Braid. He agreed that a subject could be hypnotized without any involvement on the part of the operator and that intense gazing at an object could displace the threshold of consciousness. To Hudson's way of thinking, with this displacement the subjective mind was elevated above the threshold, bringing the subjective powers of the mind into play. The subjective mind was then able to operate independently or synchronously with the objective mind, depending on the depth of hypnosis: the deeper

the hypnotic trance, the more forcefully and independently the subjective mind could exercise its powers (pp. 107-8 [of Hudson's book, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena*]).

At this point Hudson introduced a novel and ingenious analysis of the method of Braid. He pointed out that Braid had shifted the action from the magnetizer to the subject and that it was because of this shift that the phenomena had changed. With the induction of hypnotism, although the subject may gain access to his subjective mind, the hypnotizer is left untouched by the process. On the other hand, "when a mesmerist employs the old methods of inducing the subjective state,—passes, fixed gazing, and mental concentration,—he hypnotizes himself by the same act by which he mesmerizes the subject" (p. 108). Both are placed in a state in which their subjective minds are accessible. Now since telepathy takes place between two subjective minds, thought reading can only occur when the operator is also in a trance state. Clairvoyance that depends on the operator knowing the hidden information is likewise dependent on the dual-trance state. Healing too was dependent on this state of double subjectivity.⁶

For our purposes, the significance of this debate is not that it is vital to determine which side of the debate is right but rather to realize that the fairly limited scope of hypnotism today as a therapeutic agent, as practiced by modern day hypnotists using modern day theories, might not come from a purely scientific evolution of thought and research but rather from the biases of Freud and many other largely 20th century researchers. This becomes important as we attempt to see Quimby and Eddy through the eyes of their time and as they saw the world, and not through the eyes of later, potentially biased notions that placed a premium on the "respectability" of viewing all psychic and related phenomena within the confining framework of a physical universe solely run by the laws of physics without any metaphysical component. I argue that some of the followers of Quimby and Eddy have to some extent misunderstood them because of this later bias that led them to try to redefine both of them in more "respectable" terms.

Charles Poyen

Charles Poyen (officially known as Charles Poyen St. Sauveur) was not the first to promote animal magnetism, but he was the most important person in its revival in the United States in the late 1830s, continuing on into the 1840s and later.⁷ He takes on added significance for us since it is reported, as we will see later, that Phineas Quimby went to see one of his lectures. Poyen published a seminal book⁸ in 1837, *Progress of Animal Magnetism in New England*, in which he told of coming to North America, first staying in the Caribbean islands of Martinique and "Guadaloup," before coming to America (where he arrived in Portland, Maine, on May 29, 1834, age 19). But it was earlier, back in France about 1832 or 1833, that he first looked into animal magnetism, which he was hoping would help cure his nagging medical problems. He put his care into the hands of a practitioner of animal magnetism, a Dr. Chapelain, who, as was the common practice, worked with an assistant or subject (a Madame Villetard) who in turn would be "magnetized" (i.e., placed under what would later be called a mesmeric trance); while in this trance the subject would then try to diagnose the patient through an alleged higher intelligence or power than could not be explained by normal scientific understanding. Poyen wrote:

In the mean time, a note having been sent for Madame V., she arrived, sat down, and was directly put into the magnetic sleep by the Doctor. The lady had never seen me before, and very probably did not know even my name. How much surprised was I, when, after

communication had been established between us, I heard her giving a correct and minute description of the symptoms of my disease, as though she had experienced it herself, and, more than that, stating the seat and nature of it, mentioning accurately the articles of food and drink that agreed or not with my stomach.⁹

It is worthwhile pointing out here that in these early days, the goal of animal magnetism was less to cure someone directly, but rather to diagnose the person in a way not otherwise possible and then prescribe some drug or potion that could be used to help cure the affliction.

After fourteen months of residence in those islands [*Martinique and Guadeloupe*], without much improvement in my health, (the somnamlist [i.e., *somnambulist or sleepwalker, which meant one who was in the mesmeric trance*] had told me among other things, that my disease was a difficult one to cure, and that it would take me several years to recover from it.) . . .¹⁰

In time Poyen began the investigation and practice of animal magnetism himself, which led to his wanting to teach others and to lecture on the subject; this subject had been in the public eye for over fifty years, especially in Europe, where it was viewed alternately as a science, by its devotees, or a fraud and humbug, by its many critics. He wrote:

My object in teaching other people how to magnetize, was to enable them to satisfy themselves about the truth of the science, and to furnish them with the means of eliciting, by personal application, a great number of facts that would have brought it, within a short time, into public notice. The results followed my expectations. Indeed, experiments were performed with the greatest success by some of those I had instructed, not only in Boston, but also in Bangor, Cambridge, and Providence, even five or six months before I had made myself any attempt at magnetizing.¹¹

In a typical lecture, the speaker would discuss the merits of the exciting new science and its revolutionary potential for mankind. Usually a subject was included who would be placed in the mesmeric trance and then asked to perform mental feats that would be impossible to explain through normal science if authentic. One of the most common feats was clairvoyance, where the subject would be asked to describe in minute detail certain locations that the subject had never seen before, such as describing the buildings in a city a thousand or more miles away.¹²

By early 1836, Poyen was achieving some degree of notoriety, in the local press. Here is an article from *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (hereafter referred to as the *Boston Journal*), February 3, 1836:

On Friday evening last, we attended, by invitation, a lecture on this unfathomable science, by M. Poyen, a physician of the medical faculty of Paris. It was his object, particularly, on that occasion, to detail the circumstances to be attended to on part of the operator as well as patient. Though M. Poyen has been in this country but a comparatively short time, he articulates the English language agreeably, and gave abundant evidence of a familiar acquaintance with the history and effects of animal magnetism. Some of the cases recited were of a most extraordinary character, particularly such as related to the transmutation of fluids. . . . After the audience had retired, with the exception of two or three physicians, and some other gentlemen who happened to be in

conversation with each other, it was announced that Mr. Nichols, editor of the Standard, then present, possessed the magnetic power. After some persuasion, a young man seated himself for the experiment. Though the process had scarcely commenced, he raised himself, and made objections against its completion, on account of a drowsiness coming on. He afterwards resumed the seat, however, and finally, to all intents and purposes, had the appearance of being in a quiet slumber! On questioning him, he said that though exceedingly drowsy, he was not wholly unconscious of external impressions.

With reference to testing the truth of an observation, that a person might be raised, in a recumbent posture, from the floor on the tip of the fore fingers of four men, if they first inflated the lungs and then expired the air all at the same moment, Mr. Nichols took the prescribed position, and to the astonishment of all present, he was lifted with the utmost ease, several times, breast high. There could be no mistake or necromancy in the business. We assisted twice—and certainly recognized nothing like the sensation produced by a heavy weight. Drs. C. T. Jackson and J. D. Fisher, equally curious and critical in their observation on the phenomena of animal magnetism, also assisted, and freely confessed that they were not sensible of sustaining any considerable burden. Mr. Nichols weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. Verily this in an age wonders! Though we by no means intend to allow the organ of marvellousness to get the ascendancy, yet we really begin to expect a revivification of Bishop Berkeley's notion, that terrestrial existence is only ideal.

A week later appeared in the same medical journal extracts from Poyen's second lecture in the city of Boston, which came from notes provided by Poyen to the journal. The lengthy excerpt below is to allow the reader to see in a clear fashion what Poyen believed at this early date:

All the moral conditions required to exercise magnetism are comprehended in the following precepts of M. de Luyseigne, one of the first and most distinguished friends to the cause of magnetism:—A smart will to do the good. A firm belief in one's power. An entire confidence in using it.

As to the conditions required to undergo the magnetical action, they are but few in number. In the first place, the magnetized person ought to be willing to submit himself to the operation, to believe in the possibility and efficiency of magnetism; these dispositions are extremely fit to favor the magnetical action; still they are not absolutely necessary; they are not indispensable; for sleep, nay, somnambulism, can be produced, in spite of the person who is acted upon, and they are sometimes produced to his great displeasure, for he being aware of it at all—as, for instance, during fits of epilepsy, in which the patient falls completely senseless; also of hysteria, wherein the extreme pains and the loss of sense prevent the action of external impressions.

2. The magnetized individual ought to be sick; and if he be of a nervous constitution, if he be affected with a nervous disease, he finds himself in a condition highly favorable to the production of magnetical effects. The magnetical agent, which seems peculiarly designed, from its very nature, to repair the defects of harmony and supply the wants of equilibrium in the human organization, shows its power best in cases which present the mentioned wants and defects. After all, it would be incorrect to affirm that healthy people never did feel and cannot feel the influence of magnetism, as cases of the contrary have been observed.

Poyen then provided an excellent and detailed account of how one was mesmerized, including the “passes” and other physical techniques.

Let us now describe the manual process used by magnetizers to transmit the influence. The person who is to be magnetized is placed in the sitting position, on a convenient sofa, or upon a chair. The magnetizer, sitting on a higher seat, before his face, and at about a foot distant, recollects himself a few moments, during which he holds the thumbs of the patient, and remains in this position until he feels that the same degree of heat is established between the thumbs of that person and his own. Then he draws off his hands in turning them outwards, and places them upon the shoulders for nearly a minute. Afterwards he carries them down slowly, by a sort of friction very light, along the arms, down to the extremities of the fingers. He begins again the same motion five or six times; it is what magnetizers call *passes*. Then he passes his hands over the head, keeps them there a few moments, brings them down in passing before the face, at the distance of one or two inches, to the epigastrium, where he stops again, either in bearing upon that region, or without touching it with his fingers. And he thus comes down slowly along the body, to the feet. These *passes* or motions are repeated during the greatest part of the course, and when he wishes to finish it he carries them even beyond the extremities of the hands and feet, in shaking his fingers at each time. Finally, he performs before the face and the chest some transversal motions, at the distance of three or four inches, in presenting his two hands put near one another, and in removing them abruptly. At other times, he brings near together the fingers of each hand, and presents them at three or four inches distant from the head or the stomach, leaving them in that position for one or two minutes; then, alternately drawing them off, and bringing them near those parts, with more or less quickness, he imitates the motion that we naturally exercise when we wish to get rid of a liquid which wets the extremity of our fingers.

Such are the proceedings commonly used to obtain, through the action of the will, the magnetical phenomena. . . .

At this early date, Poyen also asserted the ability of the magnetizer to affect people at a distance, even when the subject was not in the same room (emphasis added):

I have said that through the action of his will and the manual proceedings above described, the magnetizer can put a person to sleep, sometimes from the first, but more commonly at the third and fourth performance; this is a fact beyond doubt. More than that, from the moment a person finds himself under the influence of the magnetizer, that is to say, after having slept once or twice by the action of his will and these manual proceedings, called passes, this magnetizer is able to make him sleep at any time, when he has a mind to, by the sole action of his will, at a distance or eight, ten or fifteen feet from the magnetized person, and without any gesture. Sleep can even be produced, in spite of the patient, or he being not aware of it. It often happened to me to wish to get somebody to sleep, says M. Roston; immediately stretchings, gaping, and other symptoms announcing sleep, manifested themselves.

Not only the magnetical action can be felt at a distance, in the same room and without apparent motion from the magnetizer, but even from one room to another, through the partition wall. . . . It is a fact a thousand times observed, that the magnetizer, through the sole action of his will, without any apparent motion, can palsy a limb, the tongue, or any muscular part of the body of the magnetize person,

though that very muscular systems seems to be endowed with a strength and activity still greater than in the watching state. . . .

Finally Poyen made clear that he was a believer in the magnetic fluid idea, which can include passing that fluid through conducting agents such as an iron cylinder, or even a glass of water:

The explanation of these incredible phenomena is to my mind very easy, provided that we admit, in man, the existence of a fluid or agent of a very peculiar nature, called magnetical. Now, the existence of this agent appears indisputable, from the facts above mentioned. It is also demonstrated by a series of analogous facts, observed by some modern psychologists respecting the electrical fluid in organized beings. We may, therefore, take the existence of a magnetical agent as granted. This agent can be moved and sent by the will of a person, wherever he wishes. . . . I allude to the property of certain bodies, an iron cylinder, for instance, loaded with electricity, to act in such and such a manner upon the persons who are brought in contact with them. A ring, a glass of water, &c. are loaded with the magnetical fluid, sent by the will of the magnetizer, and so find themselves fit to exercise all the phenomena ordinarily produced by this powerful and marvelous fluid.

Following Poyen's article in *Boston Journal*, a letter appeared in the same periodical (March 2, 1836) dated February 8, from Thomas L. Nichols, an early convert to animal magnetism and one who has treated Poyen to help relieve his stomach pains. Nichols told of becoming interested in animal magnetism two years before and then became convinced that he had the power to induce magnetic sleep and attempted to prove that by experimentation:

Some of my first attempts were upon M. Poyen himself, who has for many years suffered from disease of the digestive organs, which deprives him of the power of operating. I have never failed of relieving the pain to which he is subject, and promoting his digestion; inducing, however, nothing approaching nearer to a magnetic sleep than drowsiness and yawning.

Nichols gave an example of one of his early successful attempts at placing someone in magnetic sleep, with Poyen in attendance. Nichols was less willing to define animal magnetism than others:

I cannot describe the power by which I produced such effects [*of animal magnetism*]. Nothing is applied to the patients internally or externally; I do not even require to touch them. Animal Magnetism is the name given to it, which is perhaps as good as any other, but does not in the least explain it. It is very like magic, but it is a kind of magic of which I sincerely wish that every one affected with pain and disease may reap the benefit.

While it is commonly stated that Quimby saw Poyen lecture sometime in 1838, that date is very likely incorrect, as Poyen recorded a trip to Bangor, Maine (not far from Belfast) in August 1836 (and no later trips to Maine are recorded). As he wrote of it in October:

During my residence in that city [*Bangor*], there were 7 persons magnetized under my personal notice, most of whom were entirely ignorant of animal magnetism, and those who had heard something of it had no faith at all in its efficiency. However, all were affected, with more or less success. One of them, completely ignorant of the usual effects

of magnetism, was operated on by myself, in presence of a physician, Dr. C., and was *compelled* to sleep, although he had taken the determination not to sleep, when he began to feel an inclination to. I could not pursue my experiments on this subject, because he had left the place the very next morning. Two other persons, magnetized by two enlightened and liberal-minded physicians of the city, felt a general increase of heat, and a great drowsiness; but could not be put to a profound sleep, on account of the convulsions, which manifested themselves with such an intensity that the operator was obliged to cease. These convulsions were produced at several successive experiments. [*Poyen ended with a few more examples of only partial successes, from his perspective.*]¹³

Poyen's lectures tended to have a mixed reception since there were always those who suspected fraud from these early proponents of animal magnetism, usually by claiming that the feats were rigged. He went to great pains in this book to defend himself from such hurtful charges:

I must say that I met in Boston more opposition than any where else: my experiments were often misrepresented, and a few accidental failures spoken of as evident proof of deception. The conductors of the press were repeatedly invited by me at my lectures and performances; none of them deemed it worth their while to accede to my invitation, and yet, although, they had seen and heard nothing, they did not hesitate to criticize my doings most bitterly, and to represent the whole subject as a stupendous imposition. Even some went so far as to boldly call me an impostor in the public prints. I had not been habituated, I must confess, to see my intentions suspected, my acts so unfairly falsified, my character ridiculed! . . .

In short, the performance of the magnetic experiments, the success of which depends entirely on the state, both mental and bodily, of the two parties interested, became painful and difficult for me. . . . I resolved, therefore, to follow another course, which should prove, at least, my entire honesty. It was to allow my somnambulist to be operated on by some other person, of well-known intelligence and morality. By so doing, if the same effects could be obtained by a third one, wholly disinterested in the matter, all suspicions of collusion would vanish away, and the truth could be established without further obstacle in the mind of all candid and careful observers. Such has been the course pursued by me in my lecturing tour through Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and I will venture to say, that the results have been satisfactory to the science and the public as well as to myself. . . .

In the foregoing narrative the reader must have noticed, 1st, That in coming over to America I had no other idea than the recovering of my health, and not the least intention of ever lecturing on magnetism. 2dly, That I undertook lecturing on it solely with the philosophic view of calling the attention of an intelligent and fast progressing people upon a branch of science highly important, in my mind, to psychology as well as to physiology and medicine, and of which they should not any longer remain ignorant. 3dly, That my conduct and way of treating the subject did not appear to be that of a man whose object is gain. 4thly, That I gratuitously taught all those who wished to investigate Animal Magnetism, the way of practicing it, viz., the best and only sure means of satisfying themselves and the public about its reality or falsehood. . . .¹⁴

Poyen also went to lengths to show that this "science" was of the utmost importance to mankind, since it could be used not just locally but over a distance as well. He cited, for example, a letter

to him from another practitioner of animal magnetism, a Dr. Americus Potter, who in a letter from Providence, Rhode Island, June 22, 1837, stated (*Progress*, p. 110) that animal magnetism “must prove of incalculable benefit to mankind in the alleviation and cure of diseases.” He then discussed his successes and failures, whether or not the physical manipulation of the patient was necessary, and whether the power worked at a distance:

When I state that I have magnetized twenty persons, you will understand me to say, that twenty persons have been affected by me. I have not affected more than half of those whom I have attempted to magnetize; and they have been affected differently; some very slightly—others more, and two or three to the highest degree of magnetic influence. I have found only three with whom I could converse while in a magnetic state, or upon whom I could exercise my will, except in a very slight degree. . . . I have found manipulation to be of very little, if any use, after a person has become fully magnetized—in fact, I see no difference in the effect whether I manipulate or not, the will being the same. I have found it convenient to press my hand upon the patient’s head, the object being more to fix my own attention, than to affect the subject by coming in contact. I conclude, therefore, that the manipulations are first necessary to produce the magnetic sleep, but afterwards not essential, unless some time has elapsed since the patients have felt the magnetic influence; in which case, they become less subject, and will require the manipulation, as at first.¹⁵

In answer to the question by Poyen, “Have you been able to procure this sleep at a distance, through one or two partition walls, your patient being not at all informed of your operating on her?” the letter continued:

I can perceive no difference in time of producing an effect, or in the effect when produced, whether the distance be one foot or one mile, whether there be one or more partition walls between, or nothing at all; yet, after they are asleep, when magnetized at a distance, I do not appear to exercise quite the power of will over them that I do when in the same room; of this last I am not fully convinced, as I have not had an opportunity to test it fairly. I have put them to sleep at one mile distant, and willed them to wake in a given time, and been promptly obeyed, without knowing the result until the next day, or paying attention to the subject, after they had been magnetized. The intervening of partition walls present not the least obstruction to the magnetic influence. Whether the subject knows you intend putting him to sleep or not, is perfectly immaterial; as the magnetic state depends entirely upon the magnetizer, and not on the magnetized. This experiment I have frequently tested, and even when the subjects have known my intention, and I have been at least one mile distant, they have used the greatest exertions to counteract the influence and throw it off, but in vain. . . . So thoroughly am I convinced in regard to the effects of will upon my patients, that if the science were called the *power of will*, instead of Animal Magnetism, it would convey to my mind a much clearer idea of what it really is. In fact, with the exception of a perfect moral sense, every faculty of the mind and body seems capable of being overcome by the will of the magnetizer. . . . With innumerable experiments of this kind, I have generally met with the most perfect success; and when I have failed, which has been rarely, I have found the fault to be in myself, arising from inattention, fatigue, or ill health.¹⁶

The subject of animal magnetism was on everyone's mind at this time. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to his brother, William, January 13, 1837: "The gossip of the city is Animal Magnetism." He added, "Three weeks ago I went to see the magnetic sleep & saw the wonder."¹⁷

The kind of opposition Poyen and others like them faced was at times fierce, especially in the press. See for example this report in the April, 1837, issue of *The American Monthly Magazine* (p. 395), referring to "that species of magnetic humbug":

The revival of this old subject recently in New England, under the name of "Animal Magnetism," by a Frenchman calling himself Charles Poyen, suggested to Dr. Caustic this recent republication of his formerly successful work. . . . We doubt very much, however, if Mr. Charles Poyen can succeed in lecturing any large number of individuals into a belief of Animal Magnetism. When a man like Dr. Spurzheim [i.e., *Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, a chief proponent of phrenology, who had come to America in 1832*] comes to this country, heralded by a great European reputation, he has *carte blanche* to draw largely upon the credulity of us Yankees; and people, with some reason run through bogs and quagmires of doubt after the ignis fatuus of a new science, when pointed out by a man whose talents were truly remarkable. But when an obscure individual of ordinary capacities undertakes to hold up new lights, people must be worse than idiots to pursue their false and feeble glare. We do not pretend to say that there is nothing in Animal Magnetism, for that certain persons have been put to sleep by its exercise cannot be doubted from the testimony of a cloud of witnesses. Indeed, we have been informed that, sometimes during the lectures of Mr. Poyen,—before ever he had commenced his experiments of putting to sleep patients trained for the occasion,—a large part of the audience had been thrown into a state of passive somnambulism by simply hearing him talk upon the science! How great then must be the power of its real experimental application!

Later in the same issue under the title "Animal Magnetism" (pp. 402-405) was an article that attempted to point out the alleged credulity of those in France who were witnessing exhibitions of purported clairvoyance. The article ends with the operator asking for another possible subject, "choosing an English female friend as the subject of the experiment. The lady in question raised no objection, and the doctor commenced with a great zeal, and with every appearance of faith in his own powers. No effect, however, was produced on this lady, or on one or two of the party, all of whom obstinately refused even to gape [*in the alleged examples of somnambulism the subject would gape once in the trance*]. M. C— gave the matter up, and soon after took his leave, and thus closed my personal connection with animal magnetism."

Earlier on the same page, the writer had written about his last visit to M. C—,

I went to the appointed meeting with a good deal of curiosity to learn the issue [*he had been stalled in the past by the operator M. C— of seeing the somnambule in full action*], and a resolution not to be easily duped. When I presented myself, (I believe it was the fourth visit,) M. C— gave me a sealed paper, that was not to be opened for several weeks, and which, he said, contained the prediction of an event that was to occur to myself, between the present time and the day set for the opening of the letter, and which the *somnambule* had been enabled to foresee, in consequence of the interest she took in me and mine. With this sealed revelation, then, I was obliged to depart, to await the allotted hour.

M. C— had promised to be present at the opening of the seal, but he did not appear. I dealt fairly by him, and the cover was first formally removed, on the evening of the day endorsed on its back, as the one when it would be permitted. The *somnambule* had foretold that, in the intervening time, one of my children would be seriously ill, I should magnetise it, and that the child would recover. Nothing of the sort had occurred. No one of the family had been ill, I had not attempted to magnetise any one, or even dreamed of it, and of course, the whole prediction was a complete failure.

An equally skeptical article appeared in the *American Quarterly Review* (December 1837) XXII, No. 44. It started off by listing five mostly recent works on animal magnetism, and then continued:

The credulity of man, and his unconquerable love for the marvelous, will for ever render him the subject of easy imposition. Superstition is a component part of the human character, which may be modified and diminished by education, but can never be wholly eradicated. . . . The science (so called) of animal magnetism, has of late so engrossed public attention in this country, that we conceive ourselves called on, as public journalists, to examine some of the evidences of its truth which its advocates have presented to the world.

The writer pointed out the difference between the early use of animal magnetism, presumably by Mesmer himself, and those of the then current era:

It will be borne in mind that, at the time of which we now speak, the animal magnetism was used by its professors only as a means of curing diseases. In the healing art it was universal in its action, but somnambulism and *clairvoyance*, which are its principal results at the present day, were entirely unknown. . . . [After saying *Mesmerism almost died after the French royal commission's report ruled against animal magnetism.*] After a lapse of year, however, it was revived again under the influence of a new phenomenon, the discovery of the Marquis de Puységur, which excited an extraordinary enthusiasm. We refer to the *somnambulism* and *clairvoyance*, which were capable of being produced by it. . . . It was the will alone which was the origin of the magnetic influence, and the manner of directing the power of the will towards the patient, in order to be effectual must be physical, that is, by the eye, or by pointing the finger, or some other mode of manipulation. The theory of the poles, and the planetary influence was entirely denied.¹⁸

We see a shift here that by 1837 shows how animal magnetism as popularized by Mesmer a half century earlier had been replaced by a newer version popularized by followers of the Marquis de Puységur, such as J. P. F. Deleuze and others. Continuing in the same article, it was reported that in 1831 a French Royal Commission had once again looked into the subject of animal magnetism and in so doing had provided this helpful look at the actual process of magnetizing a subject in France at that time:

“The person,” says the report, “who was to be magnetized was placed in the sitting position, on a convenient sofa, or upon a chair. The magnetizer, sitting on a little higher seat, before his face, and at about a foot distant, recollects himself a few moments, during which he holds the thumb of the patient, and remains in this position until he feels that the same degree of heat is established between the thumbs of that person and his own.

Then he draws off his hands in turning them outwards, and places them upon the shoulders for nearly one minute. Afterwards he carries them down slowly, by a sort of friction, very light, along the arms, down to the extremities of the fingers—he begins again the same motion five or six times; it is what magnetizers call *passes*. Then he passes his hands over the head, keeps them there a few moments, brings them down in passing before the face, at the distance of one or two inches, to the epigastrium, where he stops again, either in bearing upon that region, or without touching it with his fingers. And he thus comes down slowly along the body, to the feet. These *passes*, or motions, are repeated during the greatest part of the course, and when he wishes to finish it, he carries them even beyond the extremities of the hands and feet, in shaking his fingers at each time. Finally, he performs before the face and the chest some transversal motions, at the distance of three or four inches, in presenting his two hands, put near one another, and in removing them abruptly. At other times, he brings near together the fingers of each hand, and presents them at three or four inches distant from the head or stomach, is leaving them in that position for one or two minutes; then, alternately drawing them off, and bringing them near those parts, with more or less quickness, he imitates the motion that we naturally execute when we wish to get rid of a liquid which met the extremity of our fingers.”

It is in this way that the magnetic fluid is transmitted from the magnetizer to the patient, and brings the latter in subjection to the will of the former.

Once again, in the same article the name of Poyen appeared, and it pointed out that Poyen and others were not really *explaining* the phenomena, just illustrating them:

The first lectures in this country on animal magnetism which attracted much public attention, were delivered in Providence, Rhode Island, in the year 1836, by Charles Poyen St. Sauveur, the translator of the Report on Magnetical Experiments by the Commissioners of the Royal Academy of Medicine. . . . Neither he nor his disciples put forth any hypothesis to account for the phenomena of the science: they attempt not to account for their existence by any of the known laws of nature: they exhibit those phenomena as sustained by the evidence of the senses, without the shadow of an explanation—for they are alike wonderful and inexplicable.

The author of the article then spent many pages discussing the efforts of Col. William L. Stone to determine the truthfulness (or lack thereof) of the Providence, R.I., clairvoyant, Loraina Brackett. While Stone became completely convinced of her clairvoyant abilities, the writer gave reasonable reasons for doubting the stories and took Stone to task for being so gullible. This report was indicative of the kinds of doubting press that animal magnetism got, and while the early practitioners might have thrilled and amazed many of the local citizenry in their demonstrations, they were often jeered and scoffed at as well.

Juxtaposed against the above negative and cynical views of animal magnetism is that of an almost apocalyptic supporter, signed “Mesmer,” who wrote on September 16, 1837, to the editor of the *Boston Journal*, as reprinted in the *Boston Courier*, on October 2, 1837. After giving praise to physical science, homeopathy, and phrenology, he wrote,

It was reserved for animal magnetism to crown the climax, and demonstrate the unlimited capacity of man for improvement. As respects its possessor, it gives him universal

knowledge, with little short of ubiquity of person. This discovery, alone, far exceeds all other improvements and advantages which the moderns possess over the ancients. Its incomparable benefits are so numerous and so extensive, that I am able to glance at only a small part of them, in one short essay.

In the first place, as respects public affairs, it will be an omnipotent political engine. The Secretary of the Treasury will have only to procure a sufficient number of magnetized clerks, and while they sit in his office, set them to examine all the vaults and iron chests in the Union, to ascertain every dollar of specie in the country.

The writer then went on to say that in the future it will be a crime to learn medicine without being magnetized, and added,

The common way of studying anatomy will be absolutely dispensed with; for, as the student can look through all the internal parts of the body at a glance, there will be no further use for dissections and anatomical preparations. . . . It is inconceivable why the magnetizers should confine their operations to a few nervous women; and it is still unaccountable why the magnetized should restrict themselves to a few curious experiments, which rather excite a curiosity for the wonderful, than produce any practical utility. Why is not every disease within their reach cured? Why is not every shipper informed the moment when his vessel is wrecked?¹⁹

Eventually Poyen was replaced by others, as we shall see. Eric T. Carlson wrote of Poyen,

Little is known about the remainder of Poyen's life. It is presumed that he left the United States in 1838 or 1839; we next learn that in 1841 he was in Paris diligently pursuing his medical studies in the hospitals there. Poyen had not lost his interest in the United States and had made arrangements in the summer of 1844 to return, but died at Bordeaux on the point of embarkation.²⁰

The last record that I have been able to find of Poyen in the United States was a newspaper advertisement. The newspaper, the Albany (NY) *Albany Argus*, April 19, 1839, reported that Poyen “proposes to commence a course of lectures on *Animal Magnetism*, to-morrow evening. . . .” As we saw earlier, Orestes Brownson said that Poyen left “us” (presumably meaning Americans) in the summer of 1840, headed for the “West Indies.” Poyen wrote a letter to a friend on July 28, 1842, from Montpellier, France, which was reprinted in the Boston *Courier*, October 27, 1842. In that letter he said that he had left the island of Guadeloupe on April 24, 1842, headed for France; he landed at Bordeaux on May 27. Interestingly he called the “almost unknown Island of Guadeloupe” his “native country.” He said that he loved America and had not given up hope of returning, and added, “I have been, I know, very unfairly treated by many of them [i.e., *Americans*], and by the editorial corps more especially, during my apostolic labors to spread Animal Magnetism.” Poyen then proceeded to give a detailed account of the progress in France of animal magnetism. He ended by writing, “The fear of public opinion is, in this country, as in America, the great obstacle to its rapid progress; many scientific men, though believing it to be a truth, yet dare not advocate it, lest they should be ridiculed and pointed at. No matter; let us repeat with Dr. Frapart: ‘*Truth must penetrate into this world, but by fighting only, and justice demands the fight for the benefit of truth.*’”

As cited above, Poyen attempted to return to the United States in 1844, but died of unknown causes. See this notice in the Portland [*Maine*] *Weekly Advertiser*, October 1, 1844:

Doctor Charles Poyen, who was several years in this country, and who was the first decided teacher of the ‘strange doctrine’ of *Mesmer* in New England, died recently at Bordeaux, as he was on the point of embarking for the U. States.

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As we have seen, as animal magnetism gained in popularity, it also ran into an increasing amount of opposition, especially from a scientific and medical community that saw it little more than a carnival act foisted on an unsuspecting public by charlatans and humbugs. This skepticism and opposition led to a public contest to see if the proponents of animal magnetism could in fact convince a panel of reportedly fair judges of the truthfulness of their claims. It took place in Baltimore on May 23 and 24, 1843. The *Boston Journal*²¹ reported on it in the following fashion:

Mesmerism in Baltimore.

A Challenge given by Professor C. A. Harris to Messrs. [*John Bovee*] Dods²² and [*Thomas E.*] Jeter, to submit their Theory and Experiments to scientific tests—The Challenge accepted, and a committee of decision chosen—Two nights’ debate, and the complete overthrow of the Mesmerizers.

One of the opponents in the challenge was the continuing skeptic David M. Reese, but he was joined by many others. The mesmerizers had their share of proponents as well. Despite the fact that at one point a young teenage lad was used as a subject who had purportedly excellent abilities and who *appeared* to be mesmerized, when asked later if he had really been asleep he said “no.”

The committee in due time filed their decision, which ended:

The undersigned, in view of the whole, concur in this opinion—

1st. That Messrs. Reese, Bond, and Harris [*who opposed the mesmerists*] having proved that the most marvelous and difficult “feats” in Mesmerism, may be so perfectly imitated as to defy all tests of Messrs. Jeter, Dods, and Annan to detect the imposture, have thus given great probability to the position they have assumed, which is that all those phenomena called magnetic, whenever they are either *mysterious* or *unnatural*, are the result of fraud of one party or collusion between both; and in this conclusion the undersigned concur.

2nd. That Messrs. Dods and Jeter’s subjects failed, when placed in the hands of the opposition committee, to exhibit any single phenomenon at all remarkable, but, on the contrary, furnished confirmatory evidence that their alleged somnambulism was feigned; while, at the same time, the collusion between the parties was thus rendered suspicious, since certain mysterious touches were made whenever the subjects succeeded, and the absence of such signals was uniformly followed by failure.

3d. The undersigned unite in the opinion that Messrs. Dods, Jeter and Annan have signally failed in fulfilling their promises, or furnishing any evidence whatever which can be admitted as proof that there is any truth in Mesmerism; and, as what they call real phenomena cannot, even by themselves, be discriminated from those which are wholly fictitious, we regard the result of the investigation as decidedly adverse to their cause. We therefore decide, that in our judgment Messrs. Reese, Bond and Harris have fully sustained their denial of the existence of any proofs which can rationally sustain the existence of Animal Magnetism.

The above was undersigned by eight apparently august gentlemen of Baltimore, including several physicians. Based on the report of the two-day event, it is interesting that no one appeared to have been mesmerized. Thus the event was perhaps less of an indictment of mesmeric and related phenomena as it was an indictment against apparent fraud, a charge that was commonly thrown at mesmeric practitioners. As time went on, the articles in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* became increasingly skeptical of the claims of the mesmerists.

It was into this world of astounding claims, often mixed with genuine scientific curiosity, pitted against derision and cries of humbug, that early pioneers such as Phineas P. Quimby entered.

¹ There is actually some debate on whether Mesmer really discovered that, but for our purposes, that is not significant. The later work of Marquis de Puységur on the magnetic sleep is what is important to the understanding of the history of animal magnetism or mesmerism in America.

² Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, [1993], p. viii.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

⁵ See also Adam Crabtree's comment on Braid, *From Mesmer to Freud*, p 162: "Braid described the successful treatment by hypnotism of many physical conditions, such as headache, paralysis, rheumatism, gout, epilepsy, hysteria, and spinal irritation. He pointed out that where a condition was due to an organic cause, neither hypnotism nor any other treatment could bring about cure."

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

⁷ For an interesting look at this era, including Poyen's life, see Grace Adams and Edward Hutter, *The Mad Forties* (New York: Harper & Brothers, [ca. 1942]).

⁸ It is widely considered that Poyen revived the dormant interest in animal magnetism in North America. While there is much truth to that, animal magnetism was not dead in North America before he arrived. For example, Joseph Du Commun published an influential book in 1829, *Three Lectures on Animal Magnetism*. In addition, a short-lived American periodical, the *Magnet*, was devoted to animal magnetism in 1835. Also see, for example, *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (November 5, 1834), “Case of Somnambulism,” pp. 203-209, which included an account of clairvoyance. This account followed by a few weeks a similar account of the famed somnambulist, Jane C. Ryder. Other examples of animal magnetism are reported before Ryder, nonetheless the interest in it was fairly dormant until Poyen’s efforts brought it to the public’s imagination again.

One of the little-known sources of information on Poyen is found in the 1854 book of one-time transcendentalist, Orestes Brownson: *The Spirit-Rapper; An Autobiography*. (Detroit: Thorndike Nourse, 1884 edition). Brownson met Poyen in 1836 and noted that he (Poyen) was a Saint-Simonian. He wrote, pp. 4-5:

“[He] came to the United States, and commenced, though with a very imperfect knowledge of our language, and very little facility in speaking it, a course of lectures in several of our eastern cities, on Mesmerism, or, as he preferred to call it, animal magnetism. His appearance was by no means prepossessing, and his manners, though unpretending, were very far from indicating that exquisite grace and polish which are supposed, for what reason I know not, to be peculiar to the Frenchman; but he was a serious, earnest-minded man, who in several branches of science had made solid studies. I knew him well, and esteemed him much.”

Brownson provided additional information on Poyen’s practice techniques on pp. 6-8, and then noted on p. 9 what he remembered Poyen had told him, which seems to go against what Poyen wrote about his accepting the magnetic fluid theory derived from Mesmer:

“‘No, it is not imagination,’ insisted Dr. P—, ‘any more than it is magnetic fluid, as asserted by Mesmer. It is the will of the magnetizer operating immediately on the will of the somnambulist, and through that on her organs. Or rather, it is the spiritual being in me operating immediately on the spiritual being in her, and therefore these phenomena afford an excellent refutation of materialism.’”

Finally, on p. 21, Brownson wrote: “Dr. P— having accomplished his object in visiting this country, and being invited home by his family, took leave of us in the summer of 1840, and returned to the West Indies. I have not seen him since.”

As will be seen below, Poyen died in 1844. While it is commonly and incorrectly stated that Poyen left the United States about 1838, this comment by Brownson states clearly that, according to his knowledge, he left “us” in the summer of 1840. See this humorous notice in the *Barre [MA] Gazette*, March 6, 1840:

Dr. Charles Poyen. Can any body tell us what has become of this noted professor of animal magnetism? If any one seeing this article should come across the Doctor, we wish it might be suggested to him, that in some of Miss Gleason’s fits of clairvoyance she should be sent this way with the pay for a small bill which he owes us.

⁹ Charles Poyen St. Sauveur, *Progress of Animal Magnetism in New England*. Boston: Weeks, Jordan & Co., 1837, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹² Such performances often had naysayers, some of whom claimed that they offered money if the speakers could prove clairvoyance was real, which offer they claimed was never accepted. The validity of claims of the mesmerists and clairvoyants, including testimony from witnesses who seemed sober and credible, is perhaps best deemed unresolved at this late date.

¹³ *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (November 2, 1836). In a leaflet on Quimby that Ron Hughes wrote for the Belfast Maine Historical Society about 2004, which appears on his website, he stated unequivocally:

“In 1836, Charles Poyen St. Sauveur, a French disciple of Franz or Friedrich Anton Mesmer gave a public demonstration of mesmerism (an early form of hypnotism) in Belfast which captured Quimby’s attention.”

I have been unable to verify that Quimby saw Poyen in 1836 although that is almost certainly correct, as there are no records of any trips of Poyen to Maine in 1838 and it is unlikely that Quimby would travel out of state at that time to see him. Nonetheless while it is recorded that Poyen lectured in Bangor, I have found no record that he lectured in Belfast.

¹⁴ Poyen, pp. 53-55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113. Part of this excerpt was quoted by Robert Peel in *Discovery*, p. 158, as if the words were written by Poyen, instead quoted by Poyen of what Dr. Potter wrote to him.

¹⁷ Quoted in Erika Janik, *Marketplace of the Marvelous: The Strange Origins of Modern Medicine*. Boston: Beacon Press, [2014], p. 162.

¹⁸ Another skeptic of the day was David Meredith Reese, M.D., who in his 1838 book, *Humbugs of New-York*, wrote of this time period (p. 35): “. . . M. Poyen, a French Professor of Animal Magnetism, began to find favour among the people ‘down east.’ He commenced his public lectures during the winter of 1836–’37; and found a girl who was simpleton enough to favour his designs, by becoming his somnambulist, he visited Boston and other places, and to the present hour is itinerating with one or more ‘sleeping beauties’ who are *trained for the purpose*, and by whom multitudes have been gulled into a belief in the ‘new science.’ At Providence, he seems to have gained over the faculties of physick and divinity; and by these poor factory girls have been taught an easier and more productive employment than that of attending upon their spinning jennies. Still, however, the whole farce has been laughed at by people of sense who have not brought within the charmed circle, and magnetized out of their brains, until very lately.”

After giving examples of somnambulist fraud or failure, Reese proclaimed [52-53] “Animal Magnetism, then, we may surely hope, has had its day; for one can scarcely imagine it possible, henceforth, that any can have the hardihood to practise it; and if they do, the age of humbug will indeed be the appropriate epithet for the present generation, should any body be hereafter deceived by its absurd and fallacious pretensions. It is fit that the victims of this delusion should be treated with kindness and forbearance; and that, henceforth, they and the world, should be taught the necessary and important lesson, that he or she who pretends to supernatural and miraculous powers, whether planted upon the ramparts of philosophy, or enthroned upon the semblance of religion itself, is uniformly and infallibly either a *knave* or a *fool*.”

Contrary to Reese’s hope, the interest in Animal Magnetism by 1838 was far from over.

¹⁹ This letter may have been a follow up to the September 13, 1837, issue of *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* which announced that while it had been “of late” unwilling to “meddle with the matter” of animal magnetism, recent developments in Providence, Rhode Island had been so noteworthy that they had to report on it, and they did by reporting on the Brackett case in a very favorable manner.

²⁰ Eric T. Carlson, “Charles Poyen Brings Mesmerism to America.” *Journal of the History of Medicine* (April 1960), p. 132.

²¹ This appeared in the issue of June 7, 1843. Two years earlier, *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, May 26, 1841, during Collyer’s tour in Boston, gave this sarcastic account of Collyer and Poyen:

“*Animal Magnetism*.—Since the farcical exhibitions of Mons. Poyen with a young simpleton from Rhode Island, Boston has been under no Mesmeric excitement till about the middle of last week, when returning symptoms of the old paroxysms began to appear.—It may be gratifying to those who so deeply sympathized with the extreme susceptibility and delicacy of the subject of Dr. Poyen's manipulations, to know that she has remained quite comfortable since her *confinement*. In the mean time the great foreign reviver of a neglected and much abused science, who only desired ‘*to do very mush good to de Americans,*’ has travelled out of all hearing. Should he by-and-by awake from a Rip-Van-Winkle slumber, to renew his philanthropic labors, this is the place of all others to learn the progress of animal magnetism during his residence in the metropolis of the North.

A person cognominated Dr. Collyer, from New York, commenced business in the character of a showman, the other day, at Harrington's Museum, in this city. The immediate object of attraction was a boy, brought on

by the operator. An invitation having been politely extended to the profession of the city to view the wonder, quite a number availed themselves of the opportunity, and they are now pretty thoroughly convinced that the whole exhibition, from beginning to end, is a low scheme for profiting by the credulity of the multitude.”

A month later, the *Boston Journal* (June 24, 1841) was no friendlier:

“ANIMAL MAGNETISM. ‘The dog-star rages.’ Boston,—this goodly city,—is an immense bedlam; and if the people are not all *mad*, the number of fools, always great, is daily increasing. A person who is not willing to be gulled, and to pay twenty-five cents therefor, is as rare as a black swan or a white raven. We learn from some of the city papers, that the immense lecture-room of the Masonic Temple is crowded to suffocation, six evenings in a week, and that hundreds of persons, anxious to see and hear the wonders of animal magnetism, demand admission in vain, and are compelled to retire to their homes, chagrined, mortified, disappointed, and angry, that they have not been able to gain admittance to the temple of humbuggery and folly.

But stop a moment. We have not yet been a witness of any of the operations, exercises, lectures, experiments, or whatever else they may be called, which are nightly enacted at the Masonic Temple. We speak only from the report of others, and judge only from the representations of the converts to ‘the science.’”

The *Journal* then proceeded to provide an account from one in the local press who witnessed the proceedings:

“The Daily Mail of yesterday contains an amusing account of the performances on Monday evening. ‘A Polish lady, a *stranger in Boston*,—was put in communication with the magnetized lady, and conducted the experiment in admirable style.’ Probably she was not so great a stranger to the magnetized lady, as to the Bostonians generally. The Rev. Mr. Jones was put in communication with the magnetized lady, and carried to the towns of Tremont and Peoria in Illinois, but it is said, ‘upon the whole, the experiment did not appear to be of so direct and positive a character, as many which have been tried before.’ The probability is, that the lady had never seen either of the places mentioned.

A committee, appointed to watch the experiments, ‘reported in a manner very favorable to the truth of the science’ But, unluckily for the progress of science, Mr. Adams, a *mechanic* and a *manufacturer of printing-presses*, had the audacity to ‘*volunteer* his opinion in opposition to the committee’ This act of unparalleled impudence was repeated, and the consequence was an ‘uproar, which lasted the whole evening, and entirely defeated the remainder of the experiments.’ ‘Dr. Collyer became very much excited by this foolish and unreasonable conduct on the part of Mr. Adams, and his mind being thus disturbed, re-acted upon the magnetic subject, deranged the nervous sympathy, and a total failure of the experiments was the consequence.’”

²² While John Bovee Dods was one of the key practitioners and theorists of animal magnetism in the nineteenth century, not everyone was enthralled with his public performances, or at least we deduce that from this letter (sold on the Internet auction site eBay), dated January 25, [1843], from “Charlie” to Mrs. Charles W. Scudder: “I went last night as I told you I should to the Marlboro Chapel. Oh I wish I could tell you about it. A Dr Dod[sic] pretends to have ‘discovered the philosophy of Animal Magnetism and to be able to explain it that it will be comprehended by the humblest individual.’ I thought that included me and I expected to be much edified. He is the greatest humbug I ever saw. The Chapel was crowded, at least 2000. I soon found from his bad grammar that he was an ignoramus (he did not say learn instead of teach) but his reasoning was queer.”

That series of talks by Dods was soon published by him: *Six Lectures on the Philosophy of Mesmerism, Delivered in the Marlboro’ Chapel, January 23-28, 1843*. New York: Redding & Co. [William A. Hall & Co., Printer], 1843.