

Tom and Newman: Two Brothers

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It may be one of the laws of nature that opposites attract each other as a process of strengthening weaknesses. We know that successful associations of people are made so by such grouping as will collectively fill in all of the individual weaknesses and create a perfect whole. We know that prize stock result from the mixing of blood to improve imperfect points. We know that Luther Burbank was able to produce desired qualities in plants by crossing them with stock containing the needed elements. These, however, are matters of human calculation. The marriage of big men to little women and vice-versa, and the mating of educated persons with the illiterate is common. Many hard-working women have less active husbands. Happenings of like character are hardly likely to be the results of calculation, but may rather be an indication of an instinctive human desire to help the weak and be strengthened. There are instances of affection which cannot be explained by any sexual impulse or calculation.

Two brothers, Tom and Newman Collins (the writer), were so extremely unlike in general make-up, with such different capabilities and divergent faculties that it is hard to conceive it possible that they could associate with the greatest enjoyment and benefit in so many directions.

Tom had great mental strength and personal magnetism. He was a great leader; he had, a retentive memory, and held a keen interest and knowledge in scientific subjects. From childhood he collected stamps, birds' eggs, and geological specimens, carefully and intelligently listing and indexing his collections. Indian relics, implements, and, history, literature, natural history, geology, art, music, botany, these were to him the atmosphere of his existence. He was found much in company with long-haired men and short-haired women (I speak here of the period prior to 1900). His attraction toward accomplished people seemed to be more from love of their work than a personal attachment. Many of his close friends were eminent writers, musicians, or scientists. He traveled with taxidermists, doctors, adventurers; took walking trips through the country with botanists and geological experts. He enjoyed a cultured farmer as fully as an educated millionaire. Wherever he went he managed to find some person, usually elderly, who could excite his enthusiasm. He always returned from a trip, be it for a day or a month, with some substantial benefit. He could see more substance in a days' trip than most people in a month's tour. He recognized talent in people and brought it out. A hardship to him became only one more source of knowledge and enjoyment. Tom had a loyal temperament, which appealed to people at sight. He was an entertaining story-teller, and always had a fund, of experiences and fables to suit any listeners.

He spent two years among the natives on a rubber plantation in the center of Guatemala. Only two English-speaking people were in that part of the country, one a German and the other a negro; both died shortly after he arrived. He started with a spanish grammar on the trip down, and rapidly absorbed the native language, afterwards compiling valuable notes on its construction (never published). He struggled with a worthless and indolent class of labor that no one had previously been able to use to advantage. In anticipation of the native horror of steady work he took with him a consignment of cheap jewelry which might induce the men to work

more than two days a week, so that they might earn enough money to buy ornaments for their wives. He was locked up for whipping a worthless native for a local crime.

He spent many weeks in an effort to buy an old wooden image of a native god, two hundred years old, which he found in a little native hut; he finally exchanged it for a fifteen-cent plaster-of-Paris Dominick and a half-yard of red and blue denim. The exchange ceremony was unique. On the appointed day he saw the native coming bare-headed and entirely alone, with the "god" under a cloak. The people seemed to sense his errand and stood aside bowing low and in many cases striking their foreheads on the ground. Tom opened the barn doors of his residence wide open, and the "god-father" entered with eyes straight ahead, crossed the room, deposited his god reverently on a table, prostrated himself, striking his forehead on the ground, and solemnly rose to his feet. Tom repeated the performance exactly. Then the whole performance was repeated in the presentation of the new god with a bright denim background which was transported to its new home in the same manner. Tom witnessed the installation of the new "god" and saw the population get good and gloriously drunk over the relief of responsibility in doing the job without evidence of dire punishment.

From his accounts the country was not fit for a white man to live in, for none had previously been able to do so. In his position as "administrator" of the estate he was father of the flock; he cured usually fatal snake bites by untiring personal treatment, and had some successful treatments of fly-bites on both men and animals. He gathered a wonderful collection of native pottery and unearthed valuable ancient pottery which he brought North. He also brought home a great shipment of other native products, women's head-wear, and jewelry together with a most entertaining account of experiences and the customs of the natives. Upon his return churches and societies near his home in Haddonfield had him give talks on Guatemala; his talks were most interesting and entertaining because of the great number of personal anecdotes and humorous occurrences which he included.

Tom had a wonderful faculty of finding more interesting details in a day's experience than anyone else, and of remembering them well enough to connect them up later in a continued story. A drowned sailor was washed ashore at Island Beach, and when found was reported to the coroner. The story was that the coroner arrived, saved the oilskins and gum boots that he wore and buried him in the sand. Two years later an explorer and doctor friend heard of this and wanted to run down to secure the skull for a tobacco box, which they immediately set out to do. In telling this story to some friends, he mentioned the fact that the sailor was badly swollen with water when he came ashore, and described the difficulties encountered in locating him for disinterment. An English organist who happened to be present asked if "the swelling had gone down".

Tom made a science of sailing; he did much of it and could get about in any boat. His ability to interest acquaintances in things they knew nothing about caused a doctor friend from Pittsburgh to join him in a yacht cruise in South Jersey. The doctor had never seen salt water before, and his first acquaintance with it was in a small open yacht, with week's grub in a large tin box and Torn Collins at the helm. They started from the drawbridge at Port Republic for Island Beach. The wind was heavy, with squalls from the north-west, and they started down the five miles of quiet water on Nacote Creek. When about half-way to the Mullica River, a squall jibed the boat and she quietly turned over. Tom pushed the doctor up on the upper rail, and

swam ashore, towing the boat. The doctor stepped ashore dry-footed, and watched the bailing and righting of the yacht. When ready he stepped aboard without a word and they proceeded on the trip. When they arrived at the mouth of the creek, the river was somewhat chopped up by the wind and looked terribly big to the doctor. At the mouth of the river, the yacht was run to the meadows, and the doctor was asked to step out and run around a bit while Torn took a reef. The doctor did not run much but walked slowly and seriously, looking at the heavy sea running in the bay, which extended to the horizon. In spite of his unfortunate introduction to a sailboat in quiet water he made no comment as he once more took his seat aboard the reefed yacht and they thrashed across the bay. When they arrived at the beach, in the quiet water off the thoroughfare, and the doctor once more felt solid ground under his feet he volunteered in confidence that during his wait on the meadows at the mouth of the river he was thinking of a little town out near Pittsburgh that would never see him again. In spite of his fears, however, he was able to return and to carry back with him a valuable recollection of Tom Collins.

Tom was a loving husband and had a saintly wife. He was a loving father and a good chum everywhere. His sense of humor never failed and his entertaining powers were well known to all who knew him. He was a good listener and a tireless booster, always optimistic; sickness never quenched his interest and enthusiasm. He was absolutely tireless in his pursuit of things that interested him.

I, his brother, two years younger, differed from him both physically and mentally. Tom had a head, I had hands. We both had a great measure of persistence in following our inclinations. Neither of us had more than a common school education, and we had to earn money for anything we wanted. We both had a handy philosophy that we needed little and would have to "plug" for that. I could not help taking an interest in Tom's stamp and egg collections; nobody could when he talked about them. However, I would rather get a saw and hammer to build a walk or a birdhouse, or to do jig-saw work. I was apt with tools, good at games, enjoyed fancy skating, and was very fond of sketching and drawing. I was backward in making acquaintance with strangers and rarely left an impression with them. I was a poor reader and had a poor memory except for material things. Tom could be word perfect in a chapter of history and never forget it, while I never had that trouble. I could not absorb it, though it interested me while reading it. Tom would return from some business trip accompanied by a large box full of all sorts of stones, rocks, and pebbles, all carefully labeled to indicate their kind and the path of travel they took during some glacial period. I took a listening interest in hearing about them and was intensely astonished at his knowledge and where he got it. His Indian implement collection was fascinating to me; his record of name, classification and description of varieties of mushrooms which was received as authoritative was more appreciated by me in the eating than for the names or family identifications.

In music and art we found a mutual field of action, for I could use my hands. I loved music and soon started playing. We had an old Mason & Hamlin reed organ, and a friend had taken violin lessons for some time. Tom bought an old yellow clarinet and we began on trios, which we enjoyed together for many years. It became easier to me because I could use my hands, but Tom would never say die, except perhaps in thinking of the neighbors who patiently withstood the screeching yellow clarinet for hours, night after night, in Tom's determination to master the thing. Tom could not whistle a tune, but by persistent hard work he later became a very useful cellist. I never had to work very hard to play such trios as we had, and soon took up

violin, though never having the time or money for instruction. I soon took up slide trombone, and played in various groups (the Berger and Symphony Society of Philadelphia, under the baton of W.W. Gilchrist. Later, when with the Phoenix Iron Co., I played with the Phoenix Military Band, Phoenixville, playing both trombone and piano.)

I doubt very much if I should ever have gone into music alone, and shall always be grateful to Tom for his interest in working so hard himself to draw me out and push me off into musical enjoyment. I always avoided social events because they gave me nothing to do, but with music I could venture where people gathered without feeling out of place. We enjoyed our musical work together and it becomes a most highly treasured recollection. It also brought us many musical friends in home chamber music and orchestras and built up a broad fellowship that has endured.

In sailing boats, Tom first took the initiative by hiring a sailboat at Port Republic. My father's family came from there and Grandfather's farm at Chestnut Neck was out dream-land of adventure. Tom had, as usual, found out all about sailing a boat and, as usual, he initiated me into the technical mysteries of it. In a very short time he had to content himself in telling me afterwards why I did certain things. Following other precedents, I went on at it, and he branched off on other scientific and philosophic pleasures. I sailed a party of friends on a summer cruise in a cabin sloop belonging to Capt. Jimmy Indicott of Port Republic; this was followed by several vacation trips up the New Jersey coast. I followed up the sport by purchasing the Lizzie V., a record racing yacht in New York Bay, and the famous "Thordis" from Boston, built by C.C. Hanley, which yacht was never beaten in New York Bay by similar or larger boats in our several years of racing. She had a record of 14 first prizes out of 15 starts in the Buzzards Bay races before I bought her, her record in New York Bay is good, and she was 2nd champion in the Marblehead races for two years after I sold. My sailing skill I attribute to our patient practice in sailing up the five miles of crooked Nacote Creek in the afternoons when the wind had dropped. It teaches how to trim sails to gain ground by inches.

In Bayonne a group of six of us agreed that each would design, build, and sail a 14-foot sail-boat, with no limit of sail area, in a series of races for a suitable trophy. The designing and building of these boats was a comedy of mystery, secrecy, and conspiracy that commanded much newspaper space in the Jersey City and New York papers. My little boat, "Allegro", won three straight races and won the cup, called the Allegro Cup, which I now have. The Allegro also successfully defended all challenges until the club broke up, having lost only one race in the whole series. Tom was a constant booster and attendant and always added a charm to his visits by bringing over some of his eminent friends. He was a constant producer of romance in everything he attended and things that were ordinary to me became gallant and thrilling events under his imaginative mind and scientific appreciation and expression. He had always boosted "Newm", brought him out, pushed him ahead, and held him up before others as a wonder. Why, I could not see.

We frequently came home from a day's sailing, an ordinary trip and uneventful as far as I could see. He would start telling about it and I would be astounded at what a splendid adventure we had had. He did not exaggerate, he simply noticed. He always managed to bring me out some sort of a hero and I would modestly swell up like a toy balloon. I remember one disloyal account inadvertently given to our home family.

Grandmother Sarah Lippincott of Haddonfield, with whom we and Mother lived, and Uncle Jacob H. Lippincott, Uncle John Hoopes and Aunt Gertie mopes all boasted of my determination in avoiding the smoking habit; all the men including Tom smoked---so did I but did not dare confess in the face of all this accredited virtue. Tom was describing how we came up the Mullica River in our yacht under a full sailing breeze with our large centerboard full down, laying well over on her side with leeward rail under water, when we struck a mud flat near Grandfather's farm. The centerboard skidded over the mud, turning the yacht so far on her side that she came to a stop, almost filling, and with her boom and sail largely under water. It was nearly a capsize, with us both sitting on the top side. To show my wonderful nerve, as he told it, he said the "Newm" promptly lowered himself, slacked off his sheet, and raised the centerboard until the boat righted, and we came home dry-footed. He said, "Newm did not exert himself in the least, and did not even take his pipe out of his mouth". He men heard what a terrible blunder he had made and almost wept with the others, though from disloyalty rather than disappointment. Thus are our ideals bound to be shattered.

Uncle Levi Collins was a most capable sea-captain of the old school, having sailed ships all over the world. He sometimes happened at home when we were down and did not share Tom's enthusiasm when telling of our experiences. We had a shallow river yacht with flat bottom, one summer, and prevailed upon the folks to entrust their lives to us in a fishing trip down the bay. The party consisted of Aunt Sallie E. Collins, Cousin Carrie Collins, Cousin Harry Collins, and Hezzy Leeds, an old sailor who was working on the farm. Hezzy, I think, was taken for the safety his experience might afford. We tacked down the river and out into the bay with sheet trimmed well in. The sea was head-on and the wind so heavy that some of the waves came across the bow and forward deck, a little occasionally slopping into the boat. They began to squeal and question our seamanship; they called on Hezzy for advice and he advised going back. Tom and I simultaneously recalled the fact that we had not fished yet, that being the reason for our trip. Hezzy then counseled in liquid tobacco terms that we should run along the bank so that we could get out if anything happened. This on a lee shore along the meadows where breakers were running across the points of the meadows, which were entirely under water, the meadows being full of muskrat holes and gullies mostly out of sight under water. Harry joined argument with Hezzy, and together with a wink from Tom, I concluded the evidence demanded that they should have what they wanted. We headed straight for this muddy surf and into it. Tom planned and directed that Hezzy should get out on the meadows with a line, to tow the boat from point to point. Harry was to stay on board to safeguard the two women, while Tom and I, with Hezzy out of our way, would keep the boat going and stay clear of the points. Hezzy got out with the rope and went promptly out of sight, but he had the rope and we knew he could always find where we were. Harry and the rest were making finger-prints on the boat and dodging the boom. Tom and I did a clever swimming stunt, pushing the boat from point to point to each other, until we arrived in the quiet water of Mott's Creek. Here we found everybody accounted for and caught what we were after. We came back across the bay dead before the wind, and although a much more uncertain task than tacking, it was quieter and everybody, including Hezzy, were free from worry. Upon hearing of it Uncle Levi said we had no business doing it; he is of course used to big ships.

I might recall our origin. Father, Daniel Collins, of Port Republic, N.J., married Elizabeth Lippincott of Haddonfield, N.J. He settled in New Orleans, engaged in the paint

business under the name of Collins and Simon. Tom was about one year old when Father died of black smallpox. Mother had her troubles with a baby in arms, one to come, and a dead husband, quarantined, and far from everyone she knew. Rev. J.P. Newman lived in the same house and, was very intimate with Father, I believe. He proved a friend indeed, and gave me his distinguished name. How Mother got out of her troubles I know not, but she managed to get back to Haddonfield and buried Father there. With a black smallpox case it was some accomplishment and told on her in after years. I was born on May 23rd, 1865. We made our home at her old home with her father, Charles Lippincott, and Grandmother Lippincott to whose unselfish support, both moral and financial, I enjoy a most tender memory.

Tom and I were housed in a big room over Grandfather's tailor shop. Tom had his books and yellow clarinet; I had my jig saws, drawing boards, and tools. A long tailors' table occupied one side of the room; it was about 12 feet long, as I remember it, and was filled with boys' truck. In this room we worked, played, and dreamed. Grandfather Lippincott died when we were quite young. We both worked while going to school; we delivered papers, worked in the printing office, drug stores, grocery stores, and did various other tasks for a few hours every day. Our needs were principally material and tools to work with. Tom graduated in school, I did not.

On May 1st, 1882, at the age of 17, I started an apprenticeship in carpentry with Uncle John Hoopes. I had always fancied architecture as a profession, and not being able to have a college education; nor having anyone to advise me, I followed boys' logic that if I knew how to build a house I certainly could draw one. The summer of 1882 we spent at Sea Haven, near Little Egg Harbor Inlet, where we built a hotel, two cottages, a dock and piers. In 1883 we built 3 houses about Haddonfield; in 1884 I started oil painting and sketched a 1000-foot Ocean Pier for Cape May and another for Atlantic City, besides building several houses in Haddonfield. This was the yellow clarinet and reed organ year, starting with Fred Collins (no relative) as violinist. In 1885 I bought the slide trombone and in May 1886 joined the Jennings 6th Regiment Band. In 1887 I represented the Camden N.J. local at the Chicago convention of the National League of Musicians of America, and was appointed member of the Board of Appeals and Grievances for the year ending in 1888. I also joined the Berger Orchestra of Camden; I played trombone, Parke Hogan double bass.

Most of the summers were spent at Grandfather Collins' farm near Port Republic on the Mullica River. Here was a boys' paradise, as well as some mosquitoes. Grandfather was sterling all through, and to him, Aunt Annie Fleming, Aunt Alice Cake, Aunt Sallie Stout, and Uncle Richard and Uncle Levi we owe much of our enjoyment and training. Being so far from any city they had to make most of their farm equipment. Harnesses, wagons, ox yokes, tools, etc., were of home origin. We made boats, worked on the farm, and had many adventures. We frequently went fishing, both from shore and boat. From 1882 on, we started sailing in hired boats of any kind we could get, often having to rig up some derelict garvey or skiff. We became acquainted with most of the bay men in Great Bay, and the life-saving crew at Island Beach (Little Egg Harbor Inlet), so that shelter overnight was available in almost any part of Great Bay or on the beach; our trips became more adventurous. In 1882, when I was working at Sea Haven, Tom hove in sight in a small yacht from Port Republic, and took me away with my trunk to Port Republic. We often went out with the bay-men or stopped off with the men at the fish factory, but the beach was our favorite, where we stopped off with Elmer Channels or with Charlie Horner, captain of the Coast Guard station. For several years I took a party of four

Haddonfield friends on a hired sloop "Emma" on a cruise, usually from Atlantic City at sea to Barnegat Inlet, returning in the bay to Port Republic.

In 1863 Tom secured a set of good clarinets and I bought a violin; in 1885 we persuaded some Haddonfield friends to buy instruments and we started an orchestra in our famous bedroom of childhood days. We papered it and created quite a nice rehearsal room. We made quite an impression upon the neighborhood. During a rehearsal Tom was taken sick with a hemorrhage and we took him into our adjoining bedroom. He was employed with Strawbridge and Clothier at the time and spent most of his lunch hours in the Philadelphia Library. This inactive life together with excessive practice on his clarinet broke his health. I nursed him and when able took him to Port Republic where he secured an old horse and buggy for long drives through the pines. This stopped the orchestra and the clarinet playing. When he regained his health he bought a 'cello and kept up his music.

In 1885 I designed a house to be built jointly on Estaugh Avenue, Haddonfield. We had determined that we would always live together and so built the house. I was elected chief of the Fire Department of Haddonfield in August 1887. The Company had very primitive apparatus, the water supply being from cisterns. Very few of the volunteer company knew where the cisterns were located; I prepared a chart of the town showing water cisterns. We installed a shooting gallery and games in the Fire House to inspire interest, gave numerous minstrel shows, in which I acted as Musical Director, to raise money, and with the aid of subscriptions we soon had a fine bell and hose tower and a modern hook-and-ladder truck.

In pursuing my first professional thought on architecture, I attended a few night classes in Franklin Institute, Philadelphia. I made many perspective sketches for a lumber firm in Virginia, and designed quite a number of houses. For a while I plotted real estate extracts for the Commonwealth Title Insurance Co. I worked in a clock store, B.J. Cook's Sons, while waiting for an architectural opening. On June 16, 1888, I started my first work in an architecture office, Collins and Autenreith, both strangers to me. I stayed with them until they finished the work in hand. On April 4th, 1889, I started with the Phoenix Iron Co. at Phoenixville on steel building detailing; I here had my introduction to trigonometry and steel designing. I joined the Phoenix Military Band at once with trombone, and did the piano accompanying on all concert work. Here again I was Musical Director of "Black Daisies", a minstrel troupe of local talent for the benefit of the Hospital Fund.

Tom had started manufacturing emery wheels in the old pottery on Potter Street, Haddonfield with an experienced man named T.J. Cullen. They were short of both help and money; I resigned at Phoenixville on July 1st 1890, becoming President of the Company, whose principal duties consisted of making packing boxes. Tom was Treasurer and General Manager, Cullen was Secretary. The organization was named the Peerless Vitrified Emery Wheel Company. Tom was on the road most of the time, and we soon spent our capital and had nothing to run on. Capital was enlisted and the new management released me to return to the Phoenix Iron Co. on May 11, 1891.

While with the Phoenix Iron Co. I detailed many prominent steel structures, including Court Houses, Opera Houses, Post Offices, City Halls and shops. Among others were the World Building, N.Y., the amphitheatre roof of old Madison Square Garden, the Boston Public Library,

and I had full charge of the structural parts of the Betz Building, the first high building in Philadelphia. I left Phoenix Iron Co. on March 1st, 1892 and started with Pencoyd Bridge Works on the same kind of work but with greater responsibility. My work here included the Reading Terminal Building, Phila., Hotel Metropole, Bellefontaine Bridge, Dutch Kills Drawbridge, L.I.R.R., and responsible charge of the Charleston, S.C., Post Office, the Baugh Building, Phila., and Odd Fellows Hall, Phila.

In January 1893 I joined the Symphony Society of Philadelphia, W.W.Gilchrist, conductor, playing trombone, and engaged many good symphony concerts in Music Fund Hall.

I left Pencoyd to accept an offer with Milliken Brothers of New York, on Sept. 25th, 1893, on general steel and construction work, both domestic and export. I immediately located in Bayonne and bought a racing yacht, "Lizzie V.", and renamed her "Allegro". She made a wonderful record of winnings during the four years she raced and had many memorable cruises around New York, Staten Island, Sandy Hook, and Rockaway. I also joined the Thiesen Orchestra in Greenville, playing trombone for several years. We also formed the Haydn Sextet Club: Adrian Primrose, violin, Henry Harrison, violin, Richard B. Schmidt, viola, William Krumscheid, cello, Arthur W. Small flute, and D.C.N. Collins, piano. This was the most capable and enthusiastic group of my association and one I shall recollect with the greatest pleasure. I also joined the German Liederkrantz of New York in 1900-1901, and played trombone for eight years, the orchestra being of sixty pieces, and under several eminent leaders.

With Milliken Brothers my work began with responsible charge of both designing, detailing, and construction and involved factory designs and layouts, steel designs for high buildings, the promotion of designs and development of industrial plants. Some of the largest buildings in New York came under my care: Lawyers Title Building, Ocean Grove Auditorium, New York Clearing House, Segal-Cooper Building, Morganthau Building, Dunn Building, Queen Insurance Building, Milliken Brothers entire shop plant, St. George Hotel, Brooklyn, and a great amount of export work of every description. I took charge of the Contracting Department, having charge of local and export sales, in 1900.

I left Milliken Brothers to start private practice as Engineer and Architect in 1901, during which time I designed and built the foundry plant of the Warren Foundry and Machine Co. at Phillipsburg N.J., the Locomotive Repair Shop for the Lehigh Valley R.R. at Sayre, Pa., the DeLaVergne Machine Co. Erecting Shop, N.Y., and the Lidgerwood Mfg. Co. plant at Newark.

[Written about 1905 as a eulogy to Thomas Jefferson Collins, who died 6 July 1905, by his brother, Daniel Charles Newman Collins. Transcribed in June 2003 from original typescript by Gary S. Collins. About 10 minor typos have been corrected].