Appendix C

[Transcription of the handwritten report of Dr. Frank H. Hamilton, June, 1878, upon his examination of the remains of Charles Collins.]

Case of Mr. Collins

I - Facts assumed as proven

It will be assumed that, if Mr. Collins took his own life, the act was committed after much formal preparation —that the weapon employed was the navy revolver found in his left hand—that the ball entered at the opening found in the skull back of the center of the left parietal bone, & emerged through the right parietal bone near the coronal suture, & that he was not left-handed.

It will be assumed, also, that his left arm & hand were found lying parallel to his body, or nearly so—the hand partly over and across the thigh, with the weapon lying loosely in his hand—that the right arm was in a similar position in relation to the right side of his body—that the bedclothes were drawn up to a point above the waist; that his legs were extended, and that his whole body was in a condition of easy & natural repose.

II - Argument

The following constitute serious objections to the theory of suicide under the conditions above assumed: –

1st. It is highly improbable that a man who is not left-handed would use his left hand in shooting himself in the head, especially when the act was a matter of careful deliberation, forethought & study; —when nothing interfered with the use of the right hand; —when the weapon employed was a navy revolver, eleven & half inches in

length and weighing as much as this weighed.

2d. It would, in fact, be exceedingly difficult for a man, not left handed, to hold such a weapon, with his left hand, in the position in which it must have been held for the ball to take the course which it did take, and it would have been impossible for him to have held it steadily, & to have aimed it correctly at a portion of his head where he could not see the exact direction of the muzzle, unless he had rested it against the skull, and especially would it have been impossible for him to have held the weapon so steadily & so firmly that the barrel would not have been thrown out of line, when he pulled the trigger, unless the muzzle rested against the scalp.

3d. Whether the weapon was held firmly against the scalp, or more or less removed, the left arm & hand would not probably have been found in the position in which they were found, with the weapon lying loose in the hand: and for the following reasons:—

The wound was a fatal one and the patient was rendered immediately insensible, & was more or less paralyzed; and if so, his heavy weapon, held with his left arm at a right angle with his body, & to a great disadvantage, would have fallen from his grasp beside his head, and his arm would have fallen off to the left & probably over the side of the bed. If, however, the paralysis of the arm & hand was not complete, and the hand still retained its grasp upon the weapon, both would have fallen off to the left over the side of the bed; or, if the hand could have descended to the position in which it was found being carried there by muscular action, & not by the force of gravity, thus indicating that he still retained nervous & muscular power, the fact that he retained such power

after the injury was inflicted, would have been indicated by the displacement of his right hand (convulsive), & there would not have been such a condition of repose & order in his person and bed clothes as was actually found.

If the patient recovered his consciousness more or less completely after a time—a supposition which is scarcely possible, considering the nature and character of his injuries, and the fact that he died very soon—but if he did recover somewhat, he was certainly dazed as consciousness began to return, & would certainly have disturbed his bed clothes to say the least, & probably would not have been found in his bed. If he recovered completely—which is still less possible—he would probably have resorted at once to those other weapons which were apparently provided for such a contingency; or in case he had repented of his act, there would have been left unmistakeable signs of a struggle for life and for succor.

In short, if Mr. Collins was rendered immediately unconscious & was completely paralyzed, & remained so until death, (which was probably the fact) the position of the left arm, & hand, & of the revolver is not satisfactorily explained, upon the theory of suicide. If some power to hold the weapon continued from the first, the position in which they were found is not explained, and the repose of other parts is not explained satisfactorily. If he recovered partially, the general condition of repose is not explained. If he recovered consciousness completely every thing remains unexplained.

All the conditions known, & named above, can only be rendered consistent with themselves, by supposing that Mr. Collins left arm & hand, & the revolver, were arranged & disposed after death.

III - Conclusions

The facts in this case are utterly irreconcilable with the theory of suicide while they do not present the shadow of an objection to the theory that his life was taken by another person while he was lying asleep in his bed, that the shot rendered him at once unconscious, causing complete paralysis of this entire body, – that he never recovered from the unconsciousness or paralysis & that after his death, which took place speedily owing to the profuse hemorrhage, his left arm & hand with the revolver, were placed in the position in which they were found.

Frank H. Hamilton M.D.

June 1878