**Two Renegades**

O. Henry

In the Gate City of the South the Confederate Veterans were reuniting; and I stood to see them march, beneath the tangled flags of the great conflict, to the hall of their oratory and commemoration.

While the irregular and halting line was passing I made onslaught upon it and dragged from the ranks my friend Barnard O’Keefe, who had no right to be there. For he was a Northerner born and bred; and what should he be doing hallooing for the Stars and Bars among those gray and moribund veterans? And why should he be trudging, with his shining, martial, humorous, broad face, among those warriors of a previous and alien generation?

I say I dragged him forth, and held him till the last hickory leg and waving goatee had stumbled past. And then I hustled him out of the crowd into a cool interior; for the Gate City was stirred that day, and the hand-organs wisely eliminated “Marching Through Georgia” from their repertories.

“Now, what deviltry are you up to?” I asked of O’Keefe when there were a table and things in glasses between us.

O’Keefe wiped his heated face and instigated a commotion among the floating ice in his glass before he chose to answer.

“I am assisting at the wake,” said he, “of the only nation on earth that ever did me a good turn. As one gentleman to another, I am ratifying and celebrating the foreign policy of the late Jefferson Davis, as fine a statesman as ever settled the financial question of a country. Equal ratio—that was his platform—a barrel of money for a barrel of flour—a pair of $20 bills for a pair of boots—a hatful of currency for a new hat—say, ain’t that simple compared with W. J. B.’s little old oxidized plank?”

“What talk is this?” I asked. “Your financial digression is merely a subterfuge. Why were you marching in the ranks of the Confederate Veterans?”

“Because, my lad,” answered O’Keefe, “the Confederate Government in its might and power interposed to protect and defend Barnard O’Keefe against immediate and dangerous assassination at the hands of a blood-thirsty foreign country after the Unites States of America had overruled his appeal for protection, and had instructed Private Secretary Cortelyou to reduce his estimate of the Republican majority for 1905 by one vote.”

“Come, Barney,” said I, “the Confederate States of America has been out of existence nearly forty years. You do not look older yourself. When was it that the deceased government exerted its foreign policy in your behalf?”

“Four months ago,” said O’Keefe, promptly. “The infamous foreign power I alluded to is still staggering from the official blow dealt it by Mr. Davis’s contraband aggregation of states. That’s why you see me cake-walking with the ex-rebs to the illegitimate tune about ’simmon-seeds and cotton. I vote for the Great Father in Washington, but I am not going back on Mars’ Jeff. You say the Confederacy has been dead forty years? Well, if it hadn’t been for it, I’d have been breathing to-day with soul so dead I couldn’t have whispered a single cuss-word about my native land. The O’Keefes are not overburdened with ingratitude.”

I must have looked bewildered. “The war was over,” I said vacantly, “in—”

O’Keefe laughed loudly, scattering my thoughts.

“Ask old Doc Millikin if the war is over!” he shouted, hugely diverted. “Oh, no! Doc hasn’t surrendered yet. And the Confederate States! Well, I just told you they bucked officially and solidly and nationally against a foreign government four months ago and kept me from being shot. Old Jeff’s country stepped in and brought me off under its wing while Roosevelt was having a gunboat painted and waiting for the National Campaign Committee to look up whether I had ever scratched the ticket.”

“Isn’t there a story in this, Barney?” I asked.

“No,” said O’Keefe; “but I’ll give you the facts. You know I went down to Panama when this irritation about a canal began. I thought I’d get in on the ground floor. I did, and had to sleep on it, and drink water with little zoos in it; so, of course, I got the Chagres fever. That was in a little town called San Juan on the coast.

“After I got the fever hard enough to kill a Port-au-Prince nigger, I had a relapse in the shape of Doc Millikin.

“There was a doctor to attend a sick man! If Doc Millikin had your case, he made the terrors of death seem like an invitation to a donkey-party. He had the bedside manners of a Piute medicine-man and the soothing presence of a dray loaded with iron bridge-girders. When he laid his hand on your fevered brow you felt like Cap John Smith just before Pocahontas went his bail.

“Well, this old medical outrage floated down to my shack when I sent for him. He was build like a shad, and his eyebrows was black, and his white whiskers trickled down from his chin like milk coming out of a sprinkling-pot. He had a nigger boy along carrying an old tomato-can full of calomel, and a saw.

“Doc felt my pulse, and then he began to mess up some calomel with an agricultural implement that belonged to the trowel class.

“‘I don’t want any death-mask made yet, Doc,’ I says, ‘nor my liver put in a plaster-of-Paris cast. I’m sick; and it’s medicine I need, not frescoing.’”

“‘You’re a blame Yankee, ain’t you?’ asked Doc, going on mixing up his Portland cement.

“‘I’m from the North,’ says I, ‘but I’m a plain man, and don’t care for mural decorations. When you get the Isthmus all asphalted over with that boll-weevil prescription, would you mind giving me a dose of pain-killer, or a little strychnine on toast to ease up this feeling of unhealthiness that I have got?”

“‘They was all sassy, just like you,’ says old Doc, ‘but we lowered their temperature considerable. Yes, sir, I reckon we sent a good many of ye over to old *mortuis nisi bonum*. Look at Antietam and Bull Run and Seven Pines and around Nashville! There never was a battle where we didn’t lick ye unless you was ten to our one. I knew you were a blame Yankee the minute I laid eyes on you.’”

“’don’t reopen the chasm, Doc,’ I begs him. ‘Any Yankeeness I may have is geographical; and, as far as I am concerned, a Southerner is as good as a Filipino any day. I’m feeling to bad too argue. Let’s have secession without misrepresentation, if you say so; but what I need is more laudanum and less Lundy’s Lane. If you’re mixing that compound gefloxide of gefloxicum for me, please fill my ears with it before you get around to the battle of Gettysburg, for there is a subject full of talk.’”

“By this time Doc Millikin had thrown up a line of fortifications on square pieces of paper; and he says to me: ‘Yank, take one of these powders every two hours. They won’t kill you. I’ll be around again about sundown to see if you’re alive.’”

“Old Doc’s powders knocked the chagres. I stayed in San Juan, and got to knowing him better. He was from Mississippi, and the red-hottest Southerner that ever smelled mint. He made Stonewall Jackson and R. E. Lee look like Abolitionists. He had a family somewhere down near Yazoo City; but he stayed away from the States on account of an uncontrollable liking he had for the absence of a Yankee government. Him and me got as thick personally as the Emperor of Russia and the dove of peace, but sectionally we didn’t amalgamate.

“‘Twas a beautiful system of medical practice introduced by old Doc into that isthmus of land. He’d take that bracket-saw and the mild chloride and his hypodermic, and treat anything from yellow fever to a personal friend.

“Besides his other liabilities Doc could play a flute for a minute or two. He was guilty of two tunes—’dixie’ and another one that was mighty close to the ‘Suwanee River’—you might say one of its tributaries. He used to come down and sit with me while I was getting well, and aggrieve his flute and say unreconstructed things about the North. You’d have thought that the smoke from the first gun at Fort Sumter was still floating around in the air.

“You know that was about the time they staged them property revolutions down there, that wound up in the fifth act with the thrilling canal scene where Uncle Sam has nine curtain-calls holding Miss Panama by the hand, while the bloodhounds keep Senator Morgan treed up in a cocoanut-palm.

“That’s the way it wound up; but at first it seemed as if Colombia was going to make Panama look like one of the $3.98 kind, with dents made in it in the factory, like they wear at North Beach fish fries. For mine, I played the straw-hat crowd to win; and they gave me a colonel’s commission over a brigade of twenty-seven men in the left wing and second joint of the insurgent army.

“The Colombian troops were awfully rude to us. One day when I had my brigade in a sandy spot, with its shoes off doing a battalion drill by squads, the Government army rushed from behind a bush at us, acting as noisy and disagreeable as they could.

“My troops enfiladed, left-faced, and left the spot. After enticing the enemy for three miles or so we struck a brier-patch and had to sit down. When we were ordered to throw up our toes and surrender we obeyed. Five of my best staff-officers fell, suffering extremely with stone-bruised heels.

“Then and there those Colombians took your friend Barney, sir, stripped him of the insignia of his rank, consisting of a pair of brass knuckles and a canteen of rum, and dragged him before a military court. The presiding general went through the usual legal formalities that sometimes cause a case to hang on the calendar of a South American military court as long as ten minutes. He asked me my age, and then sentenced me to be shot.

“They woke up the court interpreter, an American named Jenks, who was in the rum business and vice versa, and told him to translate the verdict.

“Jenks stretched himself and took a morphine tablet.

“‘You’ve got to back up against th’ ’dobe, old man,’ says he to me. ‘Three weeks, I believe, you get. Haven’t got a chew of fine-cut on you, have you?’

“‘Translate that again, with foot-notes and a glossary,’ says I. ‘I don’t know whether I’m discharged, condemned, or handed over to the Gerry Society.’”

“‘Oh,’ says Jenks, ’don’t you understand? You’re to be stood up against a ’dobe wall and shot in two or three weeks—three, I think, they said.’”

“‘Would you mind asking ’em which?’ says I. ‘A week don’t amount to much after you’re dead, but it seems a real nice long spell while you are alive.’”

“‘It’s two weeks,’ says the interpreter, after inquiring in Spanish of the court. ‘Shall I ask ’em again?’

“‘Let be,’ says I. ‘Let’s have a stationary verdict. If I keep on appealing this way they’ll have me shot about ten days before I was captured. No, I haven’t got any fine-cut.’”

“They sends me over to the *calaboza* with a detachment of coloured postal-telegraph boys carrying Enfield rifles, and I am locked up in a kind of brick bakery. The temperature in there was just about the kind mentioned in the cooking recipes that call for a quick oven.

“Then I gives a silver dollar to one of the guards to send for the United States consul. He comes around in pajamas, with a pair of glasses on his nose and a dozen or two inside of him.

“‘I’m to be shot in two weeks,’ says I. ‘And although I’ve made a memorandum of it, I don’t seem to get it off my mind. You want to call up Uncle Sam on the cable as quick as you can and get him all worked up about it. Have ’em send the *Kentucky* and the *Kearsarge* and the *Oregon* down right away. That’ll be about enough battleships; but it wouldn’t hurt to have a couple of cruisers and a torpedo-boat destroyer, too. And—say, if Dewey isn’t busy, better have him come along on the fastest one of the fleet.’”

“‘Now, see here, O’Keefe,’ says the consul, getting the best of a hiccup, ‘what do you want to bother the State Department about this matter for?’

“’didn’t you hear me?’ says I; ‘I’m to be shot in two weeks. Did you think I said I was going to a lawn-party? And it wouldn’t hurt of Roosevelt could get the Japs to send down the *Yellowyamtiskookum* or the *Ogotosingsing* or some other first-class cruisers to help. It would make me feel safer.’”

“‘Now, what you want,’ says the consul, ‘is not to get excited. I’ll send you over some chewing tobacco and some banana fritters when I go back. The United States can’t interfere in this. You know you were caught insurging against the government, and you’re subject to the laws of this country. To tell the truth, I’ve had an intimation from the State Department—unofficially, of course—that whenever a soldier of fortune demands a fleet of gunboats in a case of revolutionary *katzenjammer*, I should cut the cable, give him all the tobacco he wants, and after he’s shot take his clothes, if they fit me, for part payment of my salary.’”

“‘Consul,’ says I to him, ‘this is a serious question. You are representing Uncle Sam. This ain’t any little international tomfoolery, like a universal peace congress or the christening of the *Shamrock IV*. I’m an American citizen and I demand protection. I demand the Mosquito fleet, and Schley, and the Atlantic squadron, and Bob Evans, and General E. Byrd Grubb, and two or three protocols. What are you going to do about it?’

“‘Nothing doing,’ says the consul.

“‘Be off with you, then,’ says I, out of patience with him, ‘and send me Doc Millikin. Ask Doc to come and see me.’”

“Doc comes and looks through the bars at me, surrounded by dirty soldiers, with even my shoes and canteen confiscated, and he looks mightily pleased.

“‘Hello, Yank,’ says he, ‘getting a little taste of Johnson’s Island, now, ain’t ye?’

“’doc,’ says I, ‘I’ve just had an interview with the U.S. consul. I gather from his remarks that I might just as well have been caught selling suspenders in Kishineff under the name of Rosenstein as to be in my present condition. It seems that the only maritime aid I am to receive from the United States is some navy-plug to chew. Doc,’ says I, ‘can’t you suspend hostility on the slavery question long enough to do something for me?’

“‘It ain’t been my habit,’ Doc Millikin answers, ‘to do any painless dentistry when I find a Yank cutting an eye-tooth. So the Stars and Stripes ain’t lending any marines to shell the huts of the Colombian cannibals, hey? Oh, say, can you see by the dawn’s early light the star-spangled banner has fluked in the fight? What’s the matter with the War Department, hey? It’s a great thing to be a citizen of a gold-standard nation, ain’t it?’

“‘Rub it in, Doc, all you want,’ says I. ‘I guess we’re weak on foreign policy.’”

“‘For a Yank,’ says Doc, putting on his specs and talking more mild, ‘you ain’t so bad. If you had come from below the line I reckon I would have liked you right smart. Now since your country has gone back on you, you have to come to the old doctor whose cotton you burned and whose mules who stole and whose niggers you freed to help you. Ain’t that so, Yank?’

“‘It is,’ says I heartily, ‘and let’s have a diagnosis of the case right away, for in two weeks’ time all you can do is to hold an autopsy and I don’t want to be amputated if I can help it.’”

“‘Now,’ says Doc, business-like, ‘it’s easy enough for you to get out of this scrape. Money’ll do it. You’ve got to pay a long string of ’em from General Pomposo down to this anthropoid ape guarding your door. About $10,000 will do the trick. Have you got the money?’

“‘Me?’ says I. ‘I’ve got one Chili dollar, two *real* pieces, and a *medio*.’”

“‘Then if you’ve any last words, utter ’em,’ says that old reb. ‘The roster of your financial budget sounds quite much to me like the noise of a requiem.’”

“‘Change the treatment,’ says I. ‘I admit that I’m short. Call a consultation or use radium or smuggle me in some saws or something.’”

“‘Yank,’ says Doc Millikin, ‘I’ve a good notion to help you. There’s only one government in the world that can get you out of this difficulty; and that’s the Confederate States of America, the grandest nation that ever existed.’”

“Just as you said to me I says to Doc; ‘Why, the Confederacy ain’t a nation. It’s been absolved forty years ago.’”

“‘That’s a campaign lie,’ says Doc. ‘She’s running along as solid as the Roman Empire. She’s the only hope you’ve got. Now, you, being a Yank, have got to go through with some preliminary obsequies before you can get official aid. You’ve got to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate Government. Then I’ll guarantee she does all she can for you. What do you say, Yank?—it’s your last chance.’”

“‘If you’re fooling with me, Doc,’ I answers, ‘you’re no better than the United States. But as you say it’s the last chance, hurry up and swear me. I always did like corn whisky and ‘possum anyhow. I believe I’m half Southerner by nature. I’m willing to try the Klu-klux in place of the khaki. Get brisk.’”

“Doc Millikin thinks awhile, and then he offers me this oath of allegiance to take without any kind of a chaser:

“‘I, Barnard O’Keefe, Yank, being of sound body but a Republican mind, hereby swear to transfer my fealty, respect, and allegiance to the Confederate States of America, and the government thereof in consideration of said government, through its official acts and powers, obtaining my freedom and release from confinement and sentence of death brought about by the exuberance of my Irish proclivities and my general pizenness as a Yank.’”

“I repeated these words after Doc, but they seemed to me a kind of hocus-pocus; and I don’t believe any life-insurance company in the world would have issued me a policy on the strength of ’em.

“Doc went away saying he would communicate with his government immediately.

“Say—you can imagine how I felt—me to be shot in two weeks and my only hope for help being in a government that’s been dead so long that it isn’t even remembered except on Decoration Day and when Joe Wheeler signs the voucher for his pay-check. But it was all there was in sight; and somehow I thought Doc Millikin had something up his old alpaca sleeve that wasn’t all foolishness.

“Around to the jail comes old Doc again in about a week. I was flea-bitten, a mite sarcastic, and fundamentally hungry.

“‘Any Confederate ironclads in the offing?’ I asks. ’do you notice any sounds resembling the approach of Jeb Stewart’s cavalry overland or Stonewall Jackson sneaking up in the rear? If you do, I wish you’d say so.’”

“‘It’s too soon yet for help to come,’ says Doc.

“‘The sooner the better,’ says I. ‘I don’t care if it gets in fully fifteen minutes before I am shot; and if you happen to lay eyes on Beauregard or Albert Sidney Johnston or any of the relief corps, wig-wag ’em to hike along.’”

“‘There’s been no answer received yet,’ says Doc.

“’don’t forget,’ says I, ‘that there’s only four days more. I don’t know how you propose to work this thing, Doc,’ I says to him; ‘but it seems to me I’d sleep better if you had got a government that was alive and on the map—like Afghanistan or Great Britain, or old man Kruger’s kingdom, to take this matter up. I don’t mean any disrespect to your Confederate States, but I can’t help feeling that my chances of being pulled out of this scrape was decidedly weakened when General Lee surrendered.’”

“‘It’s your only chance,’ said Doc; ’don’t quarrel with it. What did your own country do for you?’

“It was only two days before the morning I was to be shot, when Doc Millikin came around again.

“‘All right, Yank,’ says he. ‘Help’s come. The Confederate States of America is going to apply for your release. The representatives of the government arrived on a fruit-steamer last night.’”

“‘Bully!’ says I—’bully for you, Doc! I suppose it’s marines with a Gatling. I’m going to love your country all I can for this.’”

“‘Negotiations,’ says old Doc, ‘will be opened between the two governments at once. You will know later to-day if they are successful.’”

“About four in the afternoon a soldier in red trousers brings a paper round to the jail, and they unlocks the door and I walks out. The guard at the door bows and I bows, and I steps into the grass and wades around to Doc Millikin’s shack.

“Doc was sitting in his hammock playing ’dixie,’ soft and low and out of tune, on his flute. I interrupted him at ‘Look away! look away!’ and shook his hand for five minutes.

“‘I never thought,’ says Doc, taking a chew fretfully, ‘that I’d ever try to save any blame Yank’s life. But, Mr. O’Keefe, I don’t see but what you are entitled to be considered part human, anyhow. I never thought Yanks had any of the rudiments of decorum and laudability about them. I reckon I might have been too aggregative in my tabulation. But it ain’t me you want to thank—it’s the Confederate States of America.’”

“‘And I’m much obliged to ’em,’ says I. ‘It’s a poor man that wouldn’t be patriotic with a country that’s saved his life. I’ll drink to the Stars and Bars whenever there’s a flagstaff and a glass convenient. But where,’ says I, ‘are the rescuing troops? If there was a gun fired or a shell burst, I didn’t hear it.’”

“Doc Millikin raises up and points out the window with his flute at the banana-steamer loading with fruit.

“‘Yank,’ says he, ‘there’s a steamer that’s going to sail in the morning. If I was you, I’d sail on it. The Confederate Government’s done all it can for you. There wasn’t a gun fired. The negotiations were carried on secretly between the two nations by the purser of that steamer. I got him to do it because I didn’t want to appear in it. Twelve thousand dollars was paid to the officials in bribes to let you go.’”

“‘Man!’ says I, sitting down hard—’twelve thousand—how will I ever—who could have—where did the money come from?’

“‘Yazoo City,’ says Doc Millikin: ‘I’ve got a little saved up there. Two barrels full. It looks good to these Colombians. ‘Twas Confederate money, every dollar of it. Now do you see why you’d better leave before they try to pass some of it on an expert?’

“‘I do,’ says I.

“‘Now let’s hear you give the password,’ says Doc Millikin.

“‘Hurrah for Jeff Davis!’ says I.

“‘Correct,’ says Doc. ‘And let me tell you something: The next tune I learn on my flute is going to be “Yankee Doodle.” I reckon there’s some Yanks that are not so pizen. Or, if you was me, would you try “The Red, White, and Blue"?’”