

# His Friend, The Enemy

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## CHAPTER I

Guy Herbert arrived in Concord, Dakota Territory, on the noon train. As soon as he had removed the stains of travel and eaten his luncheon, he made haste to inquire his way to the office of the Concord Blizzard. The Blizzard was reckoned a very potential power throughout Dakota, and not to have heard of it was synonymous with being a stranger in that part of the country. A man named Keever—Col. Archibald Keever, if you please—presided over the destinies of the Blizzard. He was also the guiding hand that manipulated the affairs of the Concord Townsite Company in those booming times of '85. Guy had to do with the Colonel on matters pertaining to the town, weighty matters so far as Guy was concerned.

The building that harbored the sanctum and its accompanying "plant" was an ungloriously two-story structure covered with tath paper held in place by strips of lath. A flight of crazy stairs clung to the outside, and Guy, somewhat doubtful of their stability, laid hold of the hand rail and ascended cautiously. At the landing above he turned sharply to the left and was confronted by a door bearing this printed placard:

Office of the Blizzard,  
Fearless Champion of the Rights of Man,  
In General,  
And of the Republican Party,  
IN PARTICULAR.

Welcome.

Wipe your feet on the mat.

Guy scraped his shoes assiduously and passed into the sanctum. One would hardly have thought that in such a misty little cubby hole the powerful mind of Archibald Keever was wont to evolve those gems of editorial wit which had made the Blizzard venerated and feared all the way from Fargo to Bismarck, and from Standing Rock as far north as Turtle Mountain. Yet such was the fact. Guy looked about him with interest. Insurance calendars, farming implement advertisements, a cheap lithograph of Topsy and another of Eliza pursued by bloodhounds did their little mite toward covering the rough board walls. Two ten-penny nails, affixed to the board wall by half their length, supported a white hat and a cane. A window containing eight panes of dusty glass let in a mellow light upon the great man who sat at a desk, his profile to the caller, and took no notice of him. Evidently the editor was in the throes of composition.

Guy had no desire to interrupt and remained standing very quietly in the center of the floor. Scratch, scratch, scratch. Humped over that antiquated desk with his old steel pen, scraping away as for dear life. What fire the Colonel must have been throwing into that editorial! Guy observed him curiously.

The Colonel was not tall, but rather short. He was also very stout—a pudgy man with an extremely pudgy countenance. His face was red, the tip of his nose conspicuously so. He wore a mustache and chin whiskers, both gray and bristling and cut in the fiercest form compatible with high respectability. The better to show the Colonel's illustrious bumps, Nature had denuded of hair the greater portion of his scalp. Phrenology had been a pastime study of Guy's, and he observed how, beginning at the temples, the hirsute fringe bordered the Colonel's head, passing, at the back, no higher than the topmost limits of philoprogenitiveness, imperfectly developed. Two small eyes, murky, but wide apart, claimed Guy's final attention.

The caller realized suddenly that he had been in the office for quite a considerable period. If the Colonel could not grant an interview, he might say so, and Guy would call again. The young man coughed. The Colonel frowned heavily, raised his left hand in token of silence and scratched on.

Guy swung on his heel and started for the door.

"Colonel!" cried a shrill voice. "Don't let him get away! Maybe he wants to subscribe!"

Guy was startled. He halted and peered about the room, finally detecting a cadaverous, ink-begrimed face topped with a snarl of red hair. The face was peering into the sanctum from the workshop through an unused stovepipe hole cut in the partition. The red haired boy grinned as he caught Guy's eye and dodged away to escape a paper-weight which the Colonel hurled at him. The Colonel's aim was bad, and Guy observed that the opening was bordered with dents and abrasions.

"By gad!" exclaimed the editor, angrily. "That imp has knocked the tar out of one of the finest things I have set hand to in many a day. If the people ever find out what they lose on account of that graceless cub, they'll rise up as one man and hang him, no doubt about it." Whirling in his pivot chair, he glowered at his caller.

"Perhaps I had better go and come back at some more convenient time," said Guy.

"The mischief has been done, and my inspiration is knocked into a cocked hat," answered the Colonel, softening. "If you wish to subscribe for my excellent paper, two-fifty a year, in advance, I shall be pleased to enter your name on the books."

"I presume I am addressing Col. Keever?"

"I do not wish to subscribe, colonel, but came on other business."

The colonel looked disappointed; nevertheless he waved his hand hospitably toward a chair.

"Very well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"My name is Herbert, Guy Herbert," answered the young man. The other acknowledged receipt of the information with a nod. "You were the manager of the Townsite Company, were you not?"

"Were!" cried the Colonel. "I am, sir, at the present moment."

"Three men owned the townsite," continued Guy; "Mr. Harlow Briggs, president of the H. G. & Y. railroad; Mr. Edward Thomas, a lumber dealer in St. Paul, and Mr. Montford Herbert. Mr. Briggs and Mr. Thomas sold out to Mr. Herbert, and Mr. Herbert—"

the young man's voice trembled—"died two months ago."

"You don't tell me!" ejaculated the Colonel. "Of course I know all about the company; in fact, I am on familiar terms with Briggs and Thomas and both knew and admired—admired, I say, sir—Mr. Montford Herbert." The Colonel settled back in his chair and shook his head sadly. "And so Herbert is gone," he murmured. "This news comes with appalling suddenness."

"Mr. Montford Herbert," resumed Guy, "was my father."

"Your father!" The Colonel struggled to his feet, rushed upon Guy and wrenched his hand powerfully. "My dear boy, this would be a happy moment for me were you not the bearer of such sorrowful news." The Colonel dropped Guy's hand, reached behind him to the tails of his coat and brought forth a large bandanna handkerchief. Applying this to his eyes, he proceeded to pace the narrow confines of the sanctum while rallying from the blow.

Guy was surprised at this manifestation of feeling. He was aware that his father had known Col. Keever well; so well that, having acquired entire charge of the town, he was on the point of dispensing with the manager's services at the time his last illness came upon him.

Halting under the stovepipe hole, the Colonel recovered the paper-weight, again seated himself and laid both paper weight and handkerchief on the desk beside him.

"As Mr. Briggs and Mr. Thomas sold out to my father," observed



"WE'LL BEAT THEM, I TELL YOU."

Guy, "and since I am my father's sole heir, it naturally follows that I—"

Guy hesitated.

"It naturally follows that you own the town," finished the colonel. "A princely inheritance, my boy."

"Do you think so?" queried Guy, hopefully.

"I do, providing we can keep the county seat."

"Then I hope Concord will be able to keep it," returned Guy, fervently.

"Aside from a few hundred dollars, this town is all my father left me."

The Colonel's face lengthened. Guy observed this and angured direfully.

"What's the matter with the county seat?" he asked. "I understood that Concord had it hard and fast."

"County seats, my boy, are peculiar institutions. In this country it takes a county seat to make a town; consequently, every settlement in a county that has been able to elect the government out of a post office feels in duty bound to step in and try for it. You are familiar, I suppose, with the fight we have had up here?"

"I know that the town of Harmony was beaten at the polls a year or more ago. I thought that settled the question."

"It should have settled the question, but it didn't. Harmony is like Banquo's ghost, and went down. Do you know what the Harmonites, under the leadership of that arch conspirator, Wilbur Vlandingham, have done?"

"No."

"Well, I'll tell you. Two-thirds of the qualified voters of Goodwill county have signed and presented a petition to the county commissioners, praying that the county seat be removed to Harmony, and the commissioners have ordered a special election to be held for the purpose of voting upon the question. This, mind you, is in direct violation of the law!" The Colonel brought his

clenched fist down on his desk with a vim that made the ink leap out of its stand and prostrated the pen rack. "What say the statutes?" he demanded. "They expressly stipulate that the people's will, with respect to changing the location of county seats, shall be learned at the general election directly following the presentation of the petition praying for such change. Now they have called a special election. A sandbag game, sir! Robbery, rank robbery!"

"If it's illegal, why can't it be stopped?" asked Guy.

The Colonel's indignation dropped away and he smiled indulgently.

"This is Dakota, my dear young man. The Commissioners are under the thumb of Vlandingham. But you wait. Archibald Keever is to the fore and the Blizzard lives! We'll beat them, I tell you."

"How?"

The Colonel tapped his brow significantly.

"It requires a two-thirds vote to capture the county seat away from us," he replied. "I have arranged matters so that Harmony will never be able to roll up a sufficient majority."

The Colonel arose and walked to the window. "Come here, Mr. Herbert," Guy passed over and stood beside him. "Behold my confidence in the outcome," added the Colonel, with a sweep of his arm.

What Guy saw was a ten-by-fifteen building in process of construction. At least a dozen men were working upon it and even a novice like Guy could see that they were very much in each other's way.

"A lot of carpenters for a small house like that," commented the young man.

"I should say so," chuckled the Colonel. "Those men were brought in from Jimtown and they're voters, every mother's son of them. I've got others building roads and repairing bridges."

He closed one of his murky little eyes, slowly and slyly. "They'll vote as I tell them to, Mr. Herbert, and there'll be enough of them to kill Harmony too dead to skin." He threw up the window. "Hello, there, Jordan!" he called to a man who was working languidly with a saw. "You fellows are getting along altogether too fast. Take a lay-off this afternoon."

Instantly all work ceased, tools were left where last used and the 12 workmen hurried away in a body. The Colonel closed the window and beamed upon Guy complacently. "That's the courthouse they're building," he added.

"Rather a small courthouse, isn't it?"

"Oh, it will grow, it will grow."

"Where does the money come from?" inquired Guy, anxiously.

"Don't worry about the money, my boy. I sold a batch of lots to a tenderfoot a few weeks ago, and it's his money that's doing all this."

"It doesn't seem just right to rush voters in in that way, Col. Keever."

"Anything's right that's successful up in this territory. This is my little plan and of course Harmony isn't laying back on its oars and waiting for me to grab the persimmons. Vlandingham and his lieutenants, Dingle, Harp, Blue and Boomer, are going to do something, but just what remains to be seen. They have a town meeting over at Harmony tonight to discuss ways and means for getting ahead of me!"

The Colonel's smile faded into a look of trouble. "I'd give a hundred dollars," said he, to know what kind of a scheme they hatch up at that meeting. They'll have lynx-eyed men on watch, however, to make sure that no Concord fellows get in."

The Colonel turned and wandered reflectively about the office. Guy sat down again and watched him thoughtfully. Finally the Colonel halted, thrust his thumbs into the arm holes of his vest and declared:

"Herbert, you're the man!"

"The man for what?"

"To run over to Harmony and take in that meeting. You're a stranger in this section, and they won't know you from Adam. Be careful, though, and don't give yourself away. Feeling is running high and both sides are exceedingly bitter. If you were to be found out you'd have a rough experience. Ever carry a revolver?"

"No."

"Then get one. I haven't anything but the office gun and can't spare that."

"Col. Keever," said Guy, reddening. "I'm not going to make a spy out of myself."

"Tush! tush! You're not doing anything dishonorable. I'd cut my tongue out before I'd counsel anything of that kind. You're a high minded young man—I can see that at a glance and I admire you for it. But those fellows on the other side of the county are blackguards, every one of them. They are laying their plans to steal the county seat away from you and all you are to do is to discover what their plans are, if possible, so we may balk them in their nefarious attempt. My boy, you have something like 1,200 lots in this town. That means a fortune for you if we can keep the county seat. If we lose the county seat your lots will be worth just what they'll bring for farming purposes, and no more. Nor is that the worst of it. Let Harmony win in this election and every man, woman and child now living in Concord will pull up stakes and move over to the other town."

"They wouldn't leave their homes and their places of business, would they?" queried Guy, aghast.

"Not much they wouldn't leave 'em—they'd take 'em along. You could put wheels under the national capitol and move it along a hundred miles over these prairies without jarring out a brick or a chunk of mortar. My word for it, Mr. Herbert, let Harmony win and there won't be so much as a hen-

coop left to mark the site of the present town of Concord."

"I'll go," said Guy.

"I thought you would," returned the Colonel, approvingly. "There's a freight down at 6:30. Take that."

"Copy. C-o-p-y!" bawled a voice through a hole in the partition.

The Colonel made a dive for the paper weight and the red-headed printer vanished in a flash.

"I'll have to grind out some stuff for that rascal, or he'll drive me crazy!" exclaimed the Colonel, tossing his hands.

"Then I won't bother you any longer," said Guy.

"You'll have to be discreet," went on the Colonel, following the young man to the door. "Don't let those Harmony chaps get an inkling as to who you are or what you're there for, that's all. Keep your plans to yourself and don't talk about them to any one in this place. There's a bad leak in this community somewhere, and more than one choice plan of mine has floated out of it and drifted over to the enemy. Sharp's the word and I shall expect a good report from you in the morning."

The Colonel gave the young man's hand a parting grip, closed the door on him and then seated himself before his desk and resumed his scratching.

"He's clay in my hands," soliloquized the Colonel, blithely. "I can do as I please with him, and can make or mar the future of this town—whichever is the more profitable."

Out in the workshop the red-headed printer had been doing some peculiar things. The moment Guy had left he had thrust the brush end of a broom out through the open window; then, on the reverse side of an old piece of copy, he had written the following:

"Guy Herbert, son of the late Montford Herbert, arrived in Concord at noon and at this hour—two p. m.—has just left the old man. He's going over to the town meeting to-night to get some pointers. Watch out for him. He's about twenty-two or three, five feet eleven or possibly six feet tall, dark hair and mustache, and looks as though he was built for business."

That was all. The printer neither addressed the note nor signed it, and the moment he finished writing the last word a soft tap fell on the back door.

The printer made haste to answer the knock. A man stood outside at the head of the rear stairway—a strapping fellow with his trousers tucked in his boot tops. He and the printer exchanged winks as the scrap of paper was handed over. Then the big fellow noiselessly descended and the printer noiselessly closed the door and removed the broom from the window.

That "leak" was through the stovepipe hole in the Blizzard office.

## CHAPTER II

### IN THE HOSTILE CAMP.

Guy had four hours and a half at his disposal before the freight train left Concord, and he made up his mind that he would put in the time looking over the town. Before descending the decrepit stairs leading from the Blizzard office, he lingered at the top to scan the three points of the compass that lay open to him. As the building occupied by the newspaper was well at the foot of the main thoroughfare, nearly the whole of Concord lay under the young man's eye.

Certainly no eulogies were to be wasted upon that collection of houses and stores. The principal street had roads debouching to left and right. Buildings were not huddled together; on the contrary, they were far apart, with stretches of virgin prairie between them. It had been the policy of the Townsite company to donate a lot in each block in the residence portion to any one who would build a house upon it. For this reason, nearly every dwelling had a block to itself.

Main street began at the Northern Pacific depot and ran south for half a mile beyond the Blizzard building, the latter closing up the ragged file of store structures. Just south of the depot was a huge, barn-like hotel. The hotel, be it observed, always formed the nucleus of the "boom" town.

Across from the hotel was the office of a real estate agent; south of that, on the same side, was a building erected by the Townsite company for a bank; then there was a drug store and then Mr. Benjamin Glimmer's Emporium, and then a livery stable, the latter all opposite the Blizzard building. Between the latter and the hotel was the new courthouse.

As Guy gave further attention to the courthouse he saw something which had before escaped him, namely, a weather vane. This vane was cut into the profile of a man's head, hand before the face, thumb to the nose and digits outspread. The head looked steadily and insolently westward and refused to move with the northwest wind. Guy's anger arose at the sight. He had no idea what such a vane might mean, but he would tolerate nothing of that kind in his town. That vane was to come down in a very short time, even if he had to remove it himself.

Descending the stairs he went over to the Emporium and introduced himself to the proprietor. Mr. Glimmer was a slender man of sallow complexion and looked at the world through iron-framed spectacles. He was glad to meet Guy and presented him to several citizens; among others, Elisha McQuilkin, the postmaster, Lemuel Bilkins, a youth of harmless aspect, whose abnormally long and spider-like legs were the standing joke of the town; Christopher Waffle, justice of the peace and proprietor of a threshing outfit, and Bill Comfort, who operated Judge Waffle's engine. Conversation with these gentlemen revealed such a depth of animosity and bitterness over the county-seat question that Guy was surprised.

"The Harmony folks have threatened to come down on us like Assyrians on the fold and run off with the county records," observed Mr Glim-

mer, his thin lips compressing and his eyes gleaming through his glasses.

"We'll fool 'em if they try it on, I can tell you. I've only to pull this rope"

—he laid his hand on a rope that dangled through a hole in the ceiling—"and a bell on the roof 'll ring out a warning and bring every citizen to the new courthouse."

"And every citizen will bring a gun," snapped Waffle.

"And use it if necessary," thundered McQuilkin.

Coming from the fairly peaceable confines of Chicago this warlike language filled Guy with considerable apprehension. It likewise gave him a realizing sense of the danger of the mission he was about to undertake. If the Harmony people were aroused in a similar degree, to be discovered taking notes at their town meeting would mean—Guy refrained from following out this train of thought. He did not care to anticipate the disaster which would probably befall him in case of discovery. Truth to tell, this work was being entered upon against the counsel of his honor. In love and war, however, all means are supposed to be fair and he was endeavoring to apply that principle to the present case. Nevertheless he was troubled.

The 6:30 o'clock freight had a few cases of merchandise for Concord and

one of the side seats just where the last flicker of sunlight touched her reddish hair into gold. A very pretty picture she was, too, sitting stiffly erect in her injured dignity and looking neither to right nor left. The large man shifted his twinkling eyes from her and gave Guy a wink.

"What's your line?" he asked.

"I don't understand you," returned Guy.

"Drummer, I take it?" The large man squinted about Guy's vicinity as though searching for sample cases.

Guy was annoyed, especially as Miss Betty's sense of the ridiculous prevailed over all and allowed a smile to twitch at the corners of her mouth.

"You are mistaken, sir," said Guy.

"I am not a drummer."

"Been long in Concord?"

"A few hours only."

"That was as long as you could stand it, I suppose. Well, I don't blame you. If you want to make a little money during this boom you've got to buy lots in a live town like Harmony. My name's Vlandingham, young man."

Guy had been on the point of saying that he already had more lots than he knew what to do with, but the large man's announcement of his name caused him to take another course. Here undoubtedly was the very Vlandingham who had the county commissioners under his thumb and was the ringleader of the conspiracy to steal the county seat away from Concord. Guy became wary on the instant.

"My name is Herbert, Mr. Vlandingham," said he. "I am going over to have a look at Harmony."

"Mr. Herbert, my daughter, Miss Elizabeth Vlandingham."

The easy familiarity of the northwest had long since claimed Wilbur Vlandingham for its own and he presented the stranger to his daughter with a cheerful disregard of the proprieties. But if he forgot himself Miss Betty was far from being ruled by his example. To Guy's profound bow she returned only the curtest of nods, two little wrinkles between her brows showing her disapproval of her father's actions. Mr. Vlandingham smiled and winked again.

"Harmony," he resumed, "is my town, Mr. Herbert."

"Our town," corrected Miss Betty.

"Certainly, my love," deferred her father; "whatever is mine will some day be yours." He turned once more to Guy. "Harmony is going to have the county seat, Mr. Herbert, and the moment the result of this special election is known lots will go up with a jump." Leaning sidewise confidentially he tapped Guy on the knee. "Take my advice. Buy a few lots now before the rise."

"I'll have to think about it," said Guy.

"Of course; and while you are thinking about it you are to accept the hospitality of my humble home."

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