

The Red Road

A Romance of Braddock's Defeat

By HUGH PENDEXTER

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I—Impoverished by the open-handed generosity of his father, Virginia gentleman, young Webster Brond is serving as scout and spy for the army under General Braddock preparing for the battle of the Clouds. He has just returned to Alexandria from a visit to the fort, where, posing as a Frenchman, he has secured valuable information. Braddock, bred to European warfare, fails to realize the importance of the fact that Brond is sent back to Fort Duquesne, also bearing a message from George Croghan, English emissary among the Indians.

CHAPTER II—Brond joins his friend and fellow scout, Round Paw, Indian chief, and they set out on their way. They fall in with a typical backwoodsman, Balsar, and the single man. The party encounters a group of settlers threatening a young girl, Elsie Dinwood, whom they accuse of witchcraft. Brond saves her from them. The girl disappears.

CHAPTER III—Webster delivers his message to Croghan, who expresses his amazement at the apathy of the Indians to the English cause. Young Col. George Washington rescues Brond from bullying English soldiers. He warns the party to be on their guard and Elsie Dinwood, Brond is sent on a scouting expedition to Fort Duquesne, and leaves with Round Paw, Cromit joins them.

CHAPTER IV—They find a French scouting party besieging an old cabin defended by a single man. Brond and Cromit make their way to the cabin. The "man" is Elsie Dinwood. A French officer, who is a member of the party, takes the Frenchman into Elsie's room during the night. Brond and Cromit are sent to look for the man. Brond is wounded and taken to Braddock's camp, again taking his way to Duquesne, and to seek Elsie.

CHAPTER V—Carrying out his plan to enter the fort unobserved, Brond resolves to visit an Indian town which a woman sachem, Allaquippa, controls. She is friendly to the English. Brond, as French, are plainly unwelcome to Allaquippa. Brond meets a French officer, Falest, who is known to Duquesne. Falest is there to win over the Indians to the English cause, but he fails. To his astonishment, Brond finds Elsie Dinwood, dressed as a man, under Allaquippa's protection. The girl tells him she has found the English, and is going to the French. Unable to dissuade her, Brond tells her of his mission to Duquesne, and she agrees to help him. They learn Beauvais has escaped from Cromit and is on his way to Duquesne. Brond resolves he must be stopped.

CHAPTER VI—Cromit comes to Brond while he is waiting to intercept Beauvais. He tells him he has killed the Frenchman after he had escaped from him. Round Paw joins them, and the three return to Allaquippa's town. Cromit has brought distinguishing news, demonstrating Braddock's army, none of the English officers understanding woods fighting, and Braddock's defeat. Brond, advised of the "Provincials," Cromit, separated from his two friends, is welcomed by Allaquippa as an Englishman. Leaving him to carry news to the English army, Brond again meets round Duquesne. Brond is made welcome, Beauvais, commander of the fort, believing him a loyal Frenchman. Brond learns Beauvais is not dead. Cromit having killed the Frenchman, Brond decides to set a trap for him. He tells Elsie who has come to the fort with Beauvais, but it is too late.

CHAPTER VII—At a dinner given by Beauvais, Brond is recognized and denounced by Beauvais as an English spy. He is rescued by Round Paw. With the Indians and Elsie, Brond escapes by the river, Elsie having destroyed the canoe. The water, to delay pursuit. Leaving the river, Brond sends Round Paw with a message to the army, warning of danger of ambush if they take the "Turtle Creek" route to the fort. Then, with Elsie, he goes on his way, Brond traveling, he takes a different route to the army, in the hope that Round Paw, Cromit, or himself, will get through safely with the warning.

CHAPTER VIII—Brond realizes a party of pursuing Indians is on their trail. The girl, having reached the limit of her endurance, has to be carried by Brond. They make for the cabin of a trader, Frazier, hoping with his help to stand off pursuers. Reaching the cabin safely, they find Frazier away, but Elsie helps greatly in the defense of the party. They succeed in the beating off the attacking Indians, and during a heavy rain, which saves them, escape. Elsie's bravery and loyalty make a deep impression on Brond. In the woods they meet a veteran Virginia forest fighter, Stephen Gist, returning from a scouting expedition.

CHAPTER IX—Gist repeats Cromit's tale of demoralization among the English regulars. Round Paw joins the party and they reach the army. Elsie refuses to seek safety in the rear, insisting on staying and sharing Brond's dangers. Braddock ignores Brond's warnings of danger. Brond again meets Colonel Washington, who confesses his misgivings of the success of the expedition. Attacked in the forest by practically invisible enemies, the English regulars are thrown into confusion. A disorderly retreat begins when Braddock is killed. Washington and his Virginians hold back the enemy, preventing annihilation. Brond finds a place of safety. Elsie, Round Paw and Cromit are both killed, Brond badly wounded, escaping with the other fugitives. He is unable to find Elsie in the confusion.

CHAPTER X—The provinces are stunned by the news of the disaster. The English army withdraws to New York, leaving the provincials to hold back the victorious savages, drunk with victory. Brond, from his wounds and joins in the defense of the frontier. The situation is not relieved until General Frazier fights his way through to Duquesne. Then Brond continues his search for Elsie Dinwood, realizing he loves her, and believing his love returned. In a hamlet he meets Elsie, in his arms, in whose charge he had left the girl. He tells Brond Elsie went to Alexandria, and Brond at once leaves for that city. There he meets a boyhood friend, Josephine, who gives her a letter from Elsie and given her a home. Brond seeks her, and finds a happy ending of his quest when Elsie, in his arms, whispers, "Oh, mister, you've come back!"

CHAPTER II

Der Hexenkopf

After passing through the Blue ridge I felt as if my visit to Alexandria had taken place in a dream. No place here for gay coats and ruffled shirts and silken hose; and what mockery would the undergrowth make of my dainty lady's exquisite attire!

A buzzard quartered the sky, and I knew there would be many of them before long following the army.

Round Paw of the Wolf clan barely glanced up as I stood beside his small fire, and yet he had discovered me coming or else he would not have been seated with his scarlet blanket covering him from head to foot. I dropped on the ground and laid aside my rifle. He filled and lighted his pipe and passed it through the blue smoke. After a few whiffs I returned it. Finally he remarked:

"My white brother has come from the home of his father."
"My father is a ghost. There is no home for me in Alexandria. My father's house belongs to another."
He was silent for a few minutes, then asked:

"You carry belts for Onas?" (The governor of Pennsylvania.)
"I carry a talking-paper to George Croghan," I told him, tapping the breast of my hunting shirt. "The big chief from over the stinking water has asked me to get men with long rifles for his army. And I have said I would go to Duquesne again. Does the man of the Wolf go with me?"

He rose and allowed his blanket to drop down on his loins. During my absence he had repainted white the paw on his chest, the totem mark of his clan, and he was oiled for war. I knew he was eager to be deep in the forests beyond the Alleghenies and was even now ready to start. Although leg-tired I did not unpin my blankets, but signified my readiness to travel. He produced some smoked meat and parched corn for me to eat and after I had finished he made up his travel-bundle, and we were off.

As I walked behind him, as much of an Indian in appearance as he if not for my disheveled hair, I described the gallant appearance of the army as it marched out of Alexandria. His only comment was:

"Big noise. The Swannock—Englishmen—cannot shoot with drums."

I answered that the soldiers would have no chance to use their guns because of the weak condition of the fort and garrison. A year earlier,

when Mr. Washington marched out of Fort Necessity, the situation might have been different. Then Duquesne was garrisoned by close to a thousand men under the command of veterans. Twelve months had seen a change in conditions. The portage at Niagara had slowed up the arrival of stores from Canada. The horses expected from Presqu' Isle had not been delivered. The garrison had been weakened by the sending back of troops to Canada.

Those bringing supplies from Canada arrived attired in rich velvets and gential from rare wines, but with their sacks empty. Waste and confusion had blighted the fine spirit of Duquesne's defenders. I had learned this much from Captain Beauvais who had readily accepted me as a loyal Frenchman.

Round Paw was never a gossip. We had traveled together for two years

and there had been many days when he barely spoke. We first met on Lake Erie's southern shore when a pack of Hurons and a few Frenchmen were giving me a hard run and on the point of catching me. It was Round Paw's fierce war cry, the terrible defiance of the Onondagas, and his deadly arrows that had caused my pursuers to slow up the chase, fearing an ambush.

In silent companionship we followed the valley of the Shenandoah and crossed the Potomac two miles west of the Conococheague and made camp in a grove of oaks. While the squirrels were broiling over the coals, Round Paw again renewed the white paint on his chest. It struck me as peculiar that he should be so persistent in making himself fit for war when for once the Western country was safe for the English and with but little likelihood of the French and their red allies ever being able to bring us the red hatchet.

The campaigns against Crown Point and Niagara might fall for a time, but the conquest of Duquesne was assured. With that stronghold in our hands, we should be freed from fear from the west of the Ohio to Lake Erie. Even those Indians in western Pennsylvania who were inclined to help the French dare not take the warpath until they knew the outcome of Braddock's expedition. So, if ever there was a time when the back-country settlers felt warranted in staying by their spring crops and leaving the blockhouses unoccupied it was now. Yet Round Paw kept his paint fresh and was most particular in dressing his hair.

A man with a beard that reached to his waist was lounging under a tree. On our approach, he rose to his feet and stretched his long arms and lounged toward us, saying:

"So you've fetched 'em back, Balsar. You're going to be a likely helper. I went a-purpose to fetch 'em back," grinned Cromit as he unfastened the prisoners' hands and ordered them to replace the stolen belts.

The thieves did their work with all the alacrity their benumbed fingers would permit; and, while they frantically bestirred themselves, the drover leisurely peeled off his "warmus," or sleeveless undercoat, and remarked:

"Too bad McDowell and his men ain't here to see the fun, but word was brought right after you left last night, Balsar, that there is to be some rare witch-hunting in Great cove and every one's gone over the mountains to see how the job's done."

Stretching his arms to limber up his powerful muscles, he examined two long whips and tested them. Cromit grinned at me and nodded toward his employer. To the badly frightened rogues, he softly advised:

"Let's see how fast you can make your heels fly."

They were off the moment he finished, racing madly over their back-track. The drover heard the scuffling of their feeble feet and turned about just as the two turned one side and dived into a bush growth. Bowling wrathfully for them to halt, he started on a lumbering run but soon gave it up and came back to where we stood. Cromit was unable to conceal his glee.

"Why did you let them serpents run loose, Balsar?" demanded the drover.

"Lor, Ben! he've been licked and wallowed almost every step of a good two mile."

"And who be you, you worthless lout, to say when thieves have had their comeuppance?" bellowed the drover, letting his rage run wild. "Stand clear of them two men."
"Now, Ben, don't you do it," advised Cromit, his reddish brows working up and down. "I'm telling you, don't you do it. I ain't no nigger, or thief. I shan't take it kindly, Ben. I'll hate it most mortally."
With an animal howl the drover drew back his long arm and lashed at the tall awkward figure. With the scream of a panther making a night kill, Cromit's long body shot through the air, his blue eyes burning with murder, his wide mouth opened to its fullest extent. As he crashed against the drover he half-laughed, half-sobbed:

"I told you not to do it, Ben."

"I told you not to do it, Ben. I told you not to do it. You devil!" gasped the drover.

"Then all the more reason why I should be quit with you. I'm off to march with Braddock's army. I've worked two days and a night for you—a whole night gitting the bells back—three days' work. You pay me and drive your own cattle."

Moaning and sighing, and taking on like one badly frozen, the drover crawled to his feet, fished a bag of coins from the bosom of his shirt and counted out a small sum into Cromit's palm. Cromit turned to me and said:

"Now I'm ready to show old Braddock's army how to fight."
The Widow Cox spoke up and shrilly upbraided him:

"Shame on you, lumbering dolt! You've hurt a most proper man."
"He'll be properer now, Mother Cox."

"Why didn't these two strangers stop your bloody work? At least the white man, if he be white. If George Croghan had been here, he'd 'a' stopped you quick enough."

"Mebbe so, mebbe not, Mother Cox. But Croghan's in Great cove. So it's no good talking his name, Mother Cox," bantered Cromit.

"How do you know he's in Great cove?" I demanded.

The widow eyed me with stern disapproval, but was quick to take the words from Cromit's mouth and told me:

"He was here three days ago and about for there. Some of his dratted Indians are straying 'round the country, and he's looking 'em up. And when he ain't hunting up his injuns, he's trying to hire our men to work on Braddock's road. Let the red-coats make their own road, I say. When our men-folks go to the Ohio they don't have no road laid down for 'em to walk on. They just git up and git."

"Where is McDowell and his men? Where are the Craigs?" I asked.

"McDowell's folks is in Great cove, I told you," huskily reminded the drover.

"And the Craig brothers are on the road to Shippensburg," said the widow. "McDowell's gone to help drive out some witches."
"But he and his men haven't time to help drive out the French," I said. She eyed me blankly, and then berated me:

"I'll be a larning to you, Ben. I told you not to do it."
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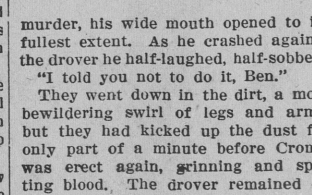
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"I Told You Not to Do It, Ben."



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CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Our modern internationalists, who think that everything good originates in Europe would like to substitute for "Pan America," the slogan "can America."
The Peasant Party won an overwhelming victory in the elections in Roumania. Now let's wait and see whether they get any farm relief over there.
A noted chemist says that a gas has been discovered which is too terrible even to be used in war. Probably the bootleggers can make something out of it.
We are more practical than you used to be, and if we were just now getting married we would much prefer a ton of coal as a wedding present to a cluster of American beauties or a piece of Italian pottery.
Of course there will be several women in the next Congress but we doubt whether that can increase the amount of conversation to any appreciable extent.
A Pittsburgh man hugged a woman against her will and the jury awarded her \$12,500 damages. Next time maybe he will be a little more careful about his pressing engagements.
The trouble with most tips on the market is that they are too tipsy.