

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 a scout for the army under General Braddock preparing for the advance on Fort Duquesne. He has just returned to Alexandria from a visit to the fort, where, posing as a Frenchman, he secured valuable information. Braddock, bred to European warfare, fails to realize the importance of such a scout. Brond is sent back to Fort Duquesne, also bearing a message to 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 Cromit, who joins them. 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 uneasiness at the apathy of the Indians to the English cause. Young Col. George Washington, rescued from bullying English soldiers, He worships a bully in a fight, and Elsie Dinwood, a French officer, is 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 apparently by a single man. Brond and Cromit make their way to the cabin. The "man" is Elsie Dinwood. A French officer, Balsar Cromit, kills her. Brond takes the Frenchman alive. Elsie escapes during the fight. Brond's captives are Lieutenant Beauvais, the scout sends him as a prisoner, with Cromit to Braddock's camp, again taking his way to Duquesne, and to seek Elsie.

CHAPTER V—Carrying out his plan to enter the fort unopposed, Brond resolves to visit an Indian town where a woman scribe, Alliquippa, controls. She is friendly to the English. The scouts, as French, are plainly unwelcome to Alliquippa. Brond meets a French officer, Balsar Cromit, he had known at Duquesne. Falest is there to win over Alliquippa to the French cause, but he fails. Brond finds Elsie Dinwood, dressed as an Indian, in Alliquippa's protection. The girl tells him she has found the English, and is going to the French. Brond tells her of his mission to Duquesne, and she promises to help him. They learn Beauvais has escaped from Cromit and is on his way to Duquesne. Brond realizes he must be stopped.

CHAPTER VI—Cromit comes to Brond while he is waiting to intercept Beauvais. He has information that he has killed the Frenchman after he had escaped from him. Round Paw joins them, and they return to Alliquippa's town. Cromit has brought disquieting news of the demoralization of Braddock's army, none of the English officers understanding woods fighting, and Brond's own resolution to advise of the "Provincials." Cromit, separated from his two friends, is welcomed by Alliquippa as an Englishman. Leaving him to carry news to the English army, Brond and Round Paw reach Duquesne. Brond is made welcome. Beauvais, commander of the fort, believing him a Frenchman, orders him to leave. Beauvais is not dead, Cromit having killed Falest, taking him for the other French officer. Brond realizes he is in deadly peril. He decides to get away at once, and tells Elsie who has come to the fort with Beauvais, but it is too late.

CHAPTER VII—At a dinner given by Beauvais to his officers, Brond is recognized and denounced by Beauvais as an English spy. He is rescued by Round Paw. Elsie, Brond escapes by the river, Elsie having destroyed all the canoes she could reach, to delay pursuit. Leaving the water, 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, a great number of Indians, traveling in a different route to the army, in the hope that either 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, Fraser, hoping with his help to stand off pursuers. Reaching the cabin safely, they flee. Brond, but Elsie helps bravely in the defense of the place. They succeed in 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 river. Elsie refuses to seek safety in the rear, insisting on staying and sharing Brond's dangers. Braddock ignores Brond's warning of danger. Brond again meets Colonel Washington, who confesses the impossibility 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, and Braddock is killed. Washington and his Virginians hold back the enemy, preventing annihilation. Brond finds a place of safety for Elsie. Round Paw and Cromit are both killed. Brond badly wounded, escapes with Elsie, and the other fugitives. He is unable to find Elsie in the confusion.

CHAPTER X—The province are stunned by the news of the disaster. The English army is withdrawn to New York, leaving the victorious savages, drunk with victory. Brond recovers from his wounds. In the darkness of the woods of the frontier, the situation is not relieved until General Forbes fights his way through to Duquesne. Then Brond continues his search for Elsie Dinwood, realizing how lucky he and believing his love returned. In a hamlet he finds one of the men in whose charge Elsie was, and tells her. Then Brond continues his search for Elsie Dinwood, realizing how lucky he and believing his love returned. In a hamlet he finds one of the men in whose charge Elsie was, and tells her. Then Brond continues his search for Elsie Dinwood, realizing how lucky he and believing his love returned. In a hamlet he finds one of the men in whose charge Elsie was, and tells her.

One fellow tried to dodge under my arm and reeled back. Regaining his balance, he stood with eyes bulging and mouth open. I was wondering how my shove could have done him any harm when he astounded me by bawling:

"H—H! It's a woman!"

Still not understanding I shifted my gaze to follow the direction of his pop-eyed staring and was in time to see the small hands clawing at the rough blouse to bring it together at the neck where my rough grasp had torn it open.

"A girl!" I stupidly muttered as I glimpsed the rounded outlines of her breasts.

With a duck and a leap, she escaped the circle and ran swiftly toward the Iroquois camp. The pack would have given chase, although they might have done her no harm, but I snatched up my rifle and called on them to halt.

"She's a French spy!" some one shouted.

"If she is then the Indians will hold her prisoner. She can't escape from the camp," I told them.

They quieted down and divided their energies between trying to get some raw runner down Simes' throat and in explaining to me the cause of the trouble. I gathered from their disjointed talk that the disguised girl was Simes' helper and had resented a buffet he inflicted for her failure to carry out some order. She had snatched up a knife and had attempted to stab him. She was promptly disarmed and turned over to him for punishment.

While I waited to see if Simes was able to continue the fight another piece came before my eyes—that of a young girl crouching before a mob of witch-hunters, her lips drawn back and exposing her small teeth, and with the same hunted wildness in the thin face. And I knew why we had found no trace of Elsie Dinwood, the Witch's head. We had sought a woman in our questing. Had we inquired for a young man, we might have found some trace of her.

A subaltern bawled my name among the kettles. I joined him and with much cursing was told I was wanted at headquarters. I expected to be conducted before General Braddock. Instead, it was Colonel Washington who was waiting to give me an audience. I was conducted to his tent, set apart from the large marquee occupied by Braddock.

The man was sick. Rather, he looked like a sick youngster. His face was thinner and his eyes larger. There was no suggestion of weakness in his voice, however, as he brusquely ordered:

"Mr. Brond, you are to take your Indian companion and scout out beyond the road-builders and look for signs. The enemy's Indians are keeping close watch on us. If you capture an Indian or a Frenchman and bring or send him to us, you will be doing us good service. If you meet any Indians, bringing bloody belts to our Delawares, make every effort to stop them. The army will move slowly. I fear. You will have ample time to scout while making your way to Duquesne."

"I will start at once, sir," I had been the officer; now he was the friend. Lowering his voice and smiling gently he said:

"I know how you dislike discipline. Webster, forest-running makes a man that way. I have presented the matter to General Braddock and it's his wish you go at once. But, as soon as he gets a grasp on all conditions here, he will insist all scouts be under military discipline. So it's well you go now."

"Immediately. There is a young woman in camp, who has been quarantined as a man. Her sex has been discovered by the wagons. They may say she is a French spy. She is Elsie Dinwood, of Great Cove. She was driven from the valley the day I left there on the charge she is a witch. I vouch for her as a poor unfortunate young woman and thoroughly loyal to the colonies."

"She shall not be molested. But there are too many women in camp already. I wish you good luck. I would like to go with you, only I'd never pass as a Frenchman."

I hastened to the Iroquois camp and found Round Paw smoking and talking with George Croghan. The Onondaga was quick to respond when I promised action. We secured a small bag of meal and some extra arrowheads for flints, for I ever considered them better than the imported article.

As we traveled the ancient path, the Onondaga informed me Major Chapman had taken his road-builders over Will's mountain, a most foolish choice and one that would cause great waste of time and much hardship. Colonel Washington could have designated a much better road, as could any of Braddock's scouts had their advice been sought.

It was near sunset by the time we had covered five miles, and as my haste to depart had been to avoid being called back and hampered by any military instructions, we were free to camp and take it leisurely. I built a fire while Round Paw was perching a turkey. While we were broiling our supper, tall lanky figure blundered into the light. It was Balsar Cromit.

"Been chasing you fellers," he informed us.

"How is this, Balsar?" I sternly demanded. "You're a wagoner, and your place is back in camp. We are out on a scout."

"If I ain't wanted, I can scout alone," he replied, displaying his meaningless grin. "Wild timber enough for all of us to scout in. But I'll be mortally dinged if I'll stick on the creek and eat salt meat while the thief who

lost my rifle is loose to hunt for fresh meat."

"Someone stole your rifle?"

"If we lick the French as sartain as that there rifle has been stole, then the French are everlastingly walloped this very minute. The thief lit out ahead of you fellers. Come round the mountain by this path."

The Onondaga caught only fragments of Cromit's talk and asked me to repeat it. After I did so, he advised:

"Let the bone-breaking man come with us. If we meet a bear he shall show how strong his hands are against claws."

"All right, Balsar; you're one of us, but I'll not be responsible for the consequences once you get back to the army. But 'tis a pity you haven't a gun."

"I'll have a mighty pert one when I overhaul that dinged thief. I knew bad luck was coming when I dreamed of that witch-girl. Consarn her!"

"Keep back."

"Who be you telling in Iroquois to 'keep back'?" rumbled Captain Jack, his dark eyes seeking to search out the thief behind me.

"An Indian friend of mine who hates the French," I told him. "You stand no chance of harming him if you should be so minded. General Braddock needs your help sorely, but he has many Iroquois in his camp."

"His Injuns are safe. So's yours," was the slow response.

"Cromit, come forward," I called. The red-head crawled through the bushes, all his teeth showing. Standing behind me he drawled:

"The Onondaga is a quarter-mile away by this time."

"Your Injun is safe so long as he scouts against the French," growled Captain Jack.

Cromit eyed him with kindling interest and said:

"You look mighty husky, mister. Do you ever rattle?"

The swarty kyer turned a gloomy glance upon my friend, then said to me:

"Your Injun's safe when you, or in Braddock's camp. We knew Croghan had some Iroquois there. But when we meet a redskin alone in the woods we never ask to see his road-belts. We shoot. How is this Braddock? He can't know anything about Injuns and their natur'!"

CHAPTER IV

The Cabin

The Onondaga aroused us shortly after sunrise and whispered to me: "Men come. Hide."

We took to cover and after a few minutes one of them came into view glancing over his shoulder as he moved. Besides a rifle each carried an ax as well as a knife at his belt. My second thought was that they must be Frenchmen, who always imitated their red companions in dress, and thus endeared themselves to the Indian. I was lining the leader with my rifle and was about to order him to drop his gun when the first man to break through the timber knelt by the fire-stones, thrust his hands into the ashes, quickly withdrew them, and announced:

"Still hot. Burnin' not more'n two hours ago."

"Look about," harshly commanded the leader.

Before they could move I called out: "Who are you men?"

None of them appeared to move a muscle until the leader slowly turned his head in our direction and tersely answered:

"White men."

But this was scarcely sufficient, for the times were ticklish. So I said: "If you're the right kind of white men, we're glad to see you. If you are the wrong kind, you will go to Will's creek with us."

"Will's creek is where we're bound for, to help General Braddock fight the French and Injuns. So show yourselves."

There were along every border certain bands of white men who had reverted to savagery, and who waged war on all decent people. Motioning for my companions to remain in hiding I stepped into the small opening, and said:

"We're scouts for Braddock's army. Now talk to me with belts."

The last speaker again spoke, saying, and civilly enough:

"Our cap'n here is 'Black Jack' of the Juniata. We go to help General Braddock."

There was none on the frontier who had not heard of Black Jack, the Indian killer. His family had been murdered by the west side of the Little crossing, or Castleman's river, a tributary of the Youghiogony, but when within a short distance of the crossing Round Paw, who was ahead, halted and lifted his ax.

Cromit and I became more cautious and paused. Round Paw beckoned us to join him. The three of us listened. At first I thought it was thunder; then came the crack of a single rifle, only the woods were so thick and so muffled any sound it was hard to determine the direction with any degree of exactness. The Indian wet his finger and held it up to catch the trifling breeze, and then bounded away at a lope.

"One man in old trade-house. Injuns trying to get him," he called back to me.

Somewhere in the neighborhood was a deserted cabin, once used by Croghan as a trading post. Round Paw and I had spent a night there two winters before. We came out on a slope and could look over the forest crown into a small clearing. And there in the middle of the opening stood the trading post. Only instead of the shrill wind of that winter's night, and the howling of the starved wolf-pack there were now ululating war-cries and the explosion of guns being fired into the log walls.

We kept under cover and counted the puffs of smoke and estimated the attacking force to number fifteen or twenty. The cabin stood in the center of the clearing and was completely encircled by the besiegers.

At last the cabin became alive. There came a puff of smoke from a loop-hole and a naked savage at the edge of the forest leaped grotesquely into view and have fallen on his face had not a man leaped forward and caught him and dragged him to the shelter of the woods. The sun glittered on something he wore around his neck, and I knew it to be a silver gorget, such as Captain Beaujeu and other French officers wore to indicate their rank. Otherwise one would have taken the fellow for a savage.

"It's a scouting party from Duquesne in charge of one or more Frenchmen," I said. "That was the leader who pulled the Indian under cover."

A fire of musketry crackled around the clearing, two guns being discharged from the woods at the foot of the slope and directly in advance of our position. The Onondaga told us to remain quiet while he scouted nearer to the besiegers. After thirty minutes Round Paw returned and tersely reported:

"French Indians and two French men have cornered a Swancock."

A repeated this in English, and Cromit promptly declared:

"Then we must bust through and help the feller out."

I talked with the Onondaga, and he said that with three men in the cabin and with him outside to range back and forth behind the attacking force the Hurons would soon lose heart and retreat. Once the Frenchmen lost control of them our task of capturing one man alive would be greatly simplified.

His judgment had great weight with me; and there was no denying the conclusion he would throw the enemy into one he stalked the savages from the rear. I agreed to make the cabin with Cromit if it could be done with any measure of safety.

The Onondaga took it on himself to provide us with a clear path to the cabin door. He briefly explained his plan, and we pronounced it good. When he set out to steal halfway around the unsuspecting circle and opposite our position, Cromit and I made down the slope and into the heavy growth where two or more of the savages were posted. We saw no signs of them, however, and only located them by the occasional tring of their guns.

Suddenly there rang out the fearful war-whoop of the Onondaga, accompanied by the crack of his rifle. There were a few seconds of silence and again Round Paw raised his voice, this time in triumph and sounding the scalp-crie. He had made his first kill and the enemy knew it, and the Huron howl rose from all sides of the clearing. The Onondaga shouted his defiance and dared the enemy to attempt his capture, and added a boast concerning a worthless, mangy scalp.

Yelping with rage those on the edge of the clearing began to search for him. The bushes rustled ahead of us, and we knew our path to the cabin would soon be open. Cromit was trembling violently and would have craved forward had I not clung to his arm. One of the two warriors was well on his way, as the careless crashing through the undergrowth told us. The other was more slow to seek the Onondaga, perhaps reluctant to leave the cabin unprotected.

I was wondering how we could avoid him, or remove him, without giving the alarm to those who were in pursuit of Round Paw when he suddenly stepped into view not more than fifteen feet from our position. How he got an inkling of our presence I do not know, nor did he live to tell, for before I could restrain him Cromit had raised himself to one knee and had whipped out his long butcher-knife. The savage discovered him and with a startled grunt threw up his musket to fire. The piece missed and as it snapped Cromit hurled the long knife. It streaked to the red throat and pierced it, and the man went down with a gurgling attempt to sound his death-crie.

"Good work and good luck," I softly cried. "Now race for it."

He halted and ripped off his gory trophy and waving it in one hand and his knife in the other came pounding after me. The rest of the Indians were still hunting the Onondaga and

Scouting farther on we came to the remains of a fresh campfire. It was no more than a night old and it was too large for an Indian to have lighted. Nor could I attribute it to the Black Hunter's band, for Captain Jack and his men would make a blaze after the Indian fashion.

The Onondaga was puzzled, for it placed a third party near the scene of the killing. My friend requested Cromit and me to stay by the charred sticks while he investigated more closely. Before setting forth he explained the spot most patiently and finally announced:

"One man. Long gun."

For proof of this assertion he pointed to a faint impression in the moss where something solid, like the butt of a rifle, had rested. Then he showed us a faint abrasion on a limb nearly level with the top of my head, and said it had been made by the barrel of the rifle. Cromit promptly cried:

"It's the critic who stole my rifle! No Cap'n Jack killed the Injun. It was the thief, and he's taking my rifle to Duquesne to trade it to the French, ding him!"

It was with difficulty that I restrained him from making an immediate search for the fellow's trail and thereby hindering the Onondaga in his work.

"I'll git that rifle even if I have to go to Duquesne alone," he sullenly informed me.

The Onondaga's signal broke up our talk. We hastened to join him and were informed:

"Black Hunter scalped the Huron. Look! The Onondaga with the nose of the Wolf has found where ten men passed close to the Huron. One man stepped aside and scalped him. The Huron was dead when they came up, or they would not have found him. The man with the long gun by the fire killed the Huron and ran away. The black-white man came along and took the scalp. Look!"

The story was plain enough in the trail made by a number of men traveling in single file. No Indian, unless he were dead, would remain at the edge of the bushes while the wayfarers approached him.

Having satisfied ourselves to this extent, we proceeded to induce Cromit by finding the trail of the man with the long rifle. The signs of his flight were very plain and suggested a panic. We followed it without dif-



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dered by the red men while he was away on a hunting trip. On returning to the ruins of his little cabin he had vowed to devote the remainder of his life to exterminating the race. From Florida to New York province his name was known, and many the story was related about him and his never-ending quest for revenge. The Indians attributed much sorcery to him and no longer considered him a mere human being. Too many dead red men had been found on trail and mountainside, in lonely valleys and on the banks of unnamed creeks, to permit of an ordinary human status. As guides, scouts and riflemen, these ten men were worth a thousand blundering regulars when it came to deep

Then We Were Clinched, With the Dirty Devil Trying to Scoop Out My Eyes.

practices, but in vigor and quickness he was scarcely up to my two years of woods training. I fought his hands from my face and drove my fist several times into his red neck.

The dust and the cheer, the suffocating sweaty odor, and most of all, his repeated attempts to maim and disgrace me, aroused my passion with- out confusing my intelligence. I shifted my tactics and began stepping back a bit, taking great care he should not trip me.

"No—half-Injun can—" he began, and I jerked to one side and drove my elbow into his throat just under the hinge of the jaw.

He went down, choking and gasping, and kicked about like a stranded fish. In his thrashing about he rolled close to the young fellow still crouching on the ground and keeping guard over my weapons. Quick as a painter the little devil lifted the heavy piece and would have brained Simes if my moccasin had not kicked the long barrel aside.

Grabbing the youngster by the neck of his blouse I lifted him to his feet and flung him aside, and berated, saying:

"You young hell-bound! What are you up to?"

Some of the men pressed forward to punish him, but I forced them back.

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At last the cabin became alive. There came a puff of smoke from a loop-hole and a naked savage at the edge of the forest leaped grotesquely into view and have fallen on his face had not a man leaped forward and caught him and dragged him to the shelter of the woods. The sun glittered on something he wore around his neck, and I knew it to be a silver gorget, such as Captain Beaujeu and other French officers wore to indicate their rank. Otherwise one would have taken the fellow for a savage.

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Yelping with rage those on the edge of the clearing began to search for him. The bushes rustled ahead of us, and we knew our path to the cabin would soon be open. Cromit was trembling violently and would have craved forward had I not clung to his arm. One of the two warriors was well on his way, as the careless crashing through the undergrowth told us. The other was more slow to seek the Onondaga, perhaps reluctant to leave the cabin unprotected.

I was wondering how we could avoid him, or remove him, without giving the alarm to those who were in pursuit of Round Paw when he suddenly stepped into view not more than fifteen feet from our position. How he got an inkling of our presence I do not know, nor did he live to tell, for before I could restrain him Cromit had raised himself to one knee and had whipped out his long butcher-knife. The savage discovered him and with a startled grunt threw up his musket to fire. The piece missed and as it snapped Cromit hurled the long knife. It streaked to the red throat and pierced it, and the man went down with a gurgling attempt to sound his death-crie.

"Good work and good luck," I softly cried. "Now race for it."

He halted and ripped off his gory trophy and waving it in one hand and his knife in the other came pounding after me. The rest of the Indians were still hunting the Onondaga and

scout toward the west side of the Little crossing, or Castleman's river, a tributary of the Youghiogony, but when within a short distance of the crossing Round Paw, who was ahead, halted and lifted his ax.

Cromit and I became more cautious and paused. Round Paw beckoned us to join him. The three of us listened. At first I thought it was thunder; then came the crack of a single rifle, only the woods were so thick and so muffled any sound it was hard to determine the direction with any degree of exactness. The Indian wet his finger and held it up to catch the trifling breeze, and then bounded away at a lope.

"One man in old trade-house. Injuns trying to get him," he called back to me.

Somewhere in the neighborhood was a deserted cabin, once used by Croghan as a trading post. Round Paw and I had spent a night there two winters before. We came out on a slope and could look over the forest crown into a small clearing. And there in the middle of the opening stood the trading post. Only instead of the shrill wind of that winter's night, and the howling of the starved wolf-pack there were now ululating war-cries and the explosion of guns being fired into the log walls.

We kept under cover and counted the puffs of smoke and estimated the attacking force to number fifteen or twenty. The cabin stood in the center of the clearing and was completely encircled by the besiegers.

At last the cabin became alive. There came a puff of smoke from a loop-hole and a naked savage at the edge of the forest leaped grotesquely into view and have fallen on his face had not a man leaped forward and caught him and dragged him to the shelter of the woods. The sun glittered on something he wore around his neck, and I knew it to be a silver gorget, such as Captain Beaujeu and other French officers wore to indicate their rank. Otherwise one would have taken the fellow for a savage.

"It's a scouting party from Duquesne in charge of one or more Frenchmen," I said. "That was the leader who pulled the Indian under cover."

A fire of musketry crackled around the clearing, two guns being discharged from the woods at the foot of the slope and directly in advance of our position. The Onondaga told us to remain quiet while he scouted nearer to the besiegers. After thirty minutes Round Paw returned and tersely reported:

"French Indians and two French men have cornered a Swancock."

A repeated this in English, and Cromit promptly declared:

"Then we must bust through and help the feller out."

I talked with the Onondaga, and he said that with three men in the cabin and with him outside to range back and forth behind the attacking force the Hurons would soon lose heart and retreat. Once the Frenchmen lost control of them our task of capturing one man alive would be greatly simplified.

His judgment had great weight with me; and there was no denying the conclusion he would throw the enemy into one he stalked the savages from the rear. I agreed to make the cabin with Cromit if it could be done with any measure of safety.

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