

# The Red Road

## A Romance of Braddock's Defeat

By Hugh Pendexter

Illustrations by  
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### SYNOPSIS

Impoverished by the open-handed generosity of his father, Virginia's gentleman, young Webster Brond is serving as a scout and spy 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 has secured valuable information. Braddock, bred to European warfare, fails to realize the importance of the news. Brond is sent back to Fort Duquesne, also bearing a message to George Croghan, English emissary among the Indians. Brond joins his friend and fellow scout, Round Paw, Indian chief, and they set out. On the way they fall in with a typical backwoodsman, Balsar Cromit, who joins them.

### CHAPTER II—Continued

"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 bound 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," buskily 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:

"Of all the numbskulls! There ain't no French near Fort Duquesne. They can't hurt us with Braddock's army going ag'in 'em. But witches right among us can 'spell' our cattle and send sore pains to our children. Merciful land! What good to drive the French from the Allegheny if witches can work their evil spells in our homes?"

"If it wa'n't for these beebes, I'd go back and help clean out the devil's nest," muttered the drover.

"There'll be no tormenting of poor people on the charge of witchcraft if George Croghan is in the cove," I told them.

I walked up the horse-path toward Parnal's Knob with Round Paw at my heels. We covered a quarter of a mile when a yell behind caused us to look back. Cromit was coming on the run and his legs carried him rapidly. I expected trouble and handed my rifle to Round Paw. Cromit halted and informed me:

"I ain't no call to sell my soul to the devil. I don't hanker to see no witches, but I'll go with you. Just stopped to git my knife. Old Braddock will give me a new gun, but he might be stingy with his knives." And he patted a large butcher knife worn without a sheath. Did he trip and fall it would be a miracle if he escaped inflicting a severe injury on himself.

The belief in witches and wizards in western Pennsylvania and Virginia was widespread. The Old world immigrants had brought along their superstitions as well as their Bibles. Once they had ventured into the unbroken forests and made a clearing and felt the solitude closing about them like a wall they worked new fancies into the old tales. If there were werewolves in Europe, why should there not be as bad, or worse, diabolic agencies in this new land of gloomy ancient forests, weird water falls and wild mountains?

What with the Painted Germans and their greswome beliefs, the Irish with their fairies, the Scotch with their gnomes and other strange hill creatures, and the English with their devotion to ghosts, it was small wonder that almost any community along the frontiers should possess those who implicitly believed in witchcraft. Nor was this delusion lacking in New England and other colonies.

As we drew clear of the hills we beheld two-score men and women grouped at the foot of a low hill on which stood a log cabin.

The door of the cabin was open but I saw none of the occupants. Nor were the people at the foot of the hill giving much heed to the cabin as we came up. Their interest was confined to a woman groveling on the grass and making a great outcry.

I pushed my way through the crowd and looked down on the young woman. She was having a fit of some kind.

"What's the matter here?" I asked.

"This young woman is witched, sir," cried a gray-haired woman.

"Witched by Elsie Dinwold," growled a man; and he turned to shake his clenched hand at the cabin on the hill. "But she'll witch us no more! We'll burn that nest. Fight the devil with fire! Der Hexenkopf has bred witches long enough. We've sent for John Hokes, sir. He's a rare wizard. He'll soon take the spell off this poor sufferer."

"Is George Croghan in the valley?" "Gone yesterday for Will's creek."

The sufferer did not fancy any shifting of attention and renewed her screaming and kicking.

"The devil hates water. Bring me a bucketful," I commanded.

I rolled up the wide sleeves of my hunting shirt as if intending to bathe my hands before attempting even a partial cure. A bucket of water was placed before me. I picked it up and dashed it over the woman. Spitting like a cat she came to a sitting posture. When she could get her breath she began calling curses down on my head.

"The devil hates cold water," I repeated. "The woman is all right now if she will keep out of the moonlight for three nights."

"Then you are a wizard and can remove spells?" eagerly asked the gray-haired woman. Others were staring at me with much respect.

"Some spells," I admitted. "Now tell me how this woman was spelled."

It seemed that Elsie Dinwold, who lived with her uncle in the cabin on Der Hexenkopf, or the Witches' Head, as the little hill was called, had laid a most malevolent trap for the woman now hobbling to her cabin for a dry shift. It consisted of a barrel and a witch snake.

The narrator was here interrupted by several, who insisted Elsie Dinwold had changed herself into a snake, or had entered the body of the snake—preferably the latter as the snake was still in the barrel and the accused was in her cabin. The victim had been induced by some magic arts to pass and look into the barrel. She beheld a large rattlesnake with Elsie Dinwold's eyes.

The barrel was pointed out to me. I walked to it and looked inside. My flesh crawled as I encountered the relentless malignity of the serpent's staring eyes.

I directed the men to kill the snake and would have remained to make sure it was done had not the appearance of a slim figure in the cabin door set the crowd into a wild uproar. The woman stepped outside and was followed by a man badly crippled, for he walked with difficulty even while using two canes. Some in the gathering began gesticulating, and then they were sweeping up the hill, a frantic mob.

"Why all this fuss over a snake in a barrel?" I asked, fearing some harm would be inflicted on the woman and the cripple.

"She is a woman of Der Hexenkopf!" accused a woman, pointing a trembling finger.

"She comes of a foul brood," excitedly explained a man.

I took time to look more closely. The woman, scarcely more than a girl, had suddenly taken alarm for the man's safety, and had interposed her slim figure between him and her accusers. Her loosened hair was blowing about her face and half-veiling her thin features. She leaned forward as she watched us, her body lithe and wiry as a boy's, her lips parted in a little feline snarl.

Knowing me to be a stranger and yearning for an impartial judge, she centered her wild gaze on me and panted:

"I'm no witch. These folks be fools! I live here alone with my uncle. He is old, a cripple with rheumatism pains. Several years ago the beastly Germans named this place Der Hexenkopf. My poor mother died from fear and sorrow. My two sisters, older'n me, were driven out of the valley. I am last of the women to live on the Witches' Head, and they won't let me live in peace."

"Keep your wicked jaws closed tight, or we'll pin 'em together," roared the red-faced man.

I waved my hands for silence and requested:

"Will some of you good folks tell me what she has done besides putting the snake in the barrel?"

It was the old man, her uncle, who enlightened me.

"They say she sent a sickness to Oscar Kluck's white horse," he tremulously explained. "Oscar Kluck came here this morning early and asked me to pay four pounds for the hurt done the animal. I had no money."

"He was a good boss, my white one. I refused four pounds for him," cried Kluck. "Now she's spoiled him—the d-d spawn!"

Some one tugged my elbow. It was Cromit. His face was weak from fear, and his voice trembled as he whispered:

"I've been looking at the white horse. I know horses. He's old and oughter be shot. He was never worth four pounds. Four shillings would be nearer." He scuttled back to the Onondaga. The cripple was speaking.

"If she confesses and promises never to do it again, shall she be left unharmed?"

"Let her say she is a witch and then leave the valley this day, never to come back, and she shan't be whipped," a man promised.

"But I can't go," wailed the girl. "Who would take care of my uncle? The dear God knows I would gladly go and never look toward this place again if my uncle could go with me!"

"Never mind me, little Elsie. You must not be whipped," growled her uncle.

"Teach the d-d brat we can break her spells!" screamed a woman.

"She threatens us with the devil's power! She should be burned and her ashes scattered at midnight," loudly declared a man in English but speaking with a thick accent.

I interposed: "Enough. There will be no burning, nor whipping. She is scarcely more than a girl. You people talk like crazy folks."

"And who be you, mister, to come to Der Hexenkopf and say what we'll do and what we won't?" a woman fiercely demanded of me.

"I am recruiting for Braddock's army. Three pounds sterling to every man who enlists. A fine red coat and a fine new musket. This man beside me is Balsar Cromit from McDowell's mill. He has enlisted. My red friend back there is an Onondaga Indian. He will bring an ax in his hand if I call. I have this rifle, which makes a good club. The young woman shall not be whipped."

"Horror! No whipping!" yelled Cromit, and he stretched forth his half-closed hands and began turning on his heel in search of any who might care to argue the point more intimately.

I had no intention of getting into a rough-and-tumble fight with the settlers, so I threw up the rifle and held them back. While they were huddled together the Onondaga let out a war-whoop and came charging up the hill, bounding high and swinging his ax. The women screamed and fell back; the men forgot me to cover the retreat of the women. I yelled for the Indian to halt and for the settlers to listen. When I had secured their attention I said:

"Drop back a bit and let me talk with the woman alone. This is no place for either her or her uncle. Perhaps it can be arranged for both to leave this valley."

With much grumbling and many loud threats they accepted the truce and retired some distance down the hill. Cromit and the Onondaga had no wish to draw closer to the cabin, so I went to the forlorn couple alone. The man was seated on a log, leaning forward by resting on his canes, and breathing heavily. His eyes were bulging in a fashion I did not like. The girl glared at me, unable to believe I could be a friend, yet puzzled at my defiance of her neighbors.

"You have nothing to fear from me," I told her.

"Child!" she bitterly repeated. "I'm an old woman. I stopped being a child when very small. My mother was pretty. Till they called her a witch her hair was as brown as mine. My father went over the mountains, where no one had been, and never came back. That was when I was a baby. My uncle lived here with us and supplied us with meat. Then they called my mother a witch, and she died."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Didn't Have Nerve to Cook the Little Pig

A Cleveland housewife who was entertaining some very special friends from out of the city, wanted to have a dinner that would linger in their memory for some time to come. What could be nicer, she thought, than a roast suckling pig?

Accordingly the little pig was sent home from the butcher's, unwrapped and laid on the kitchen table, where her small son caught sight of it and burst into tears.

"Don't cook that dear little piggie!" he wailed, disconsolately.

His mother sent him from the kitchen and poked the pig up to carry it across the room.

"In that moment," she reports, "my courage failed me. There was some-

thing so much like a little baby about that poor little pig that I set it down in a hurry. I realized then and there that I didn't have the nerve to cook it. Like my son, I wiped the tears out of my eyes and put the 'dear little piggie' out of my mind forever. We had roast beef for dinner."

### Polar Temperatures

The fact that it is colder at the South pole than it is at the North pole has been explained by the fact that the South pole is believed to lie in the middle of a large continent and also at a higher elevation than the North Geographical pole. This would account for a lower temperature.

# Adrift With Humor

### FIGURE THIS OUT

"Where did you buy that miracle hat?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't think I know what hat you are referring to."

"Well, yesterday you had a new hat on and I understand some one was calling it a miracle hat."

"I remember some one telling me how well it became me, but I can't seem to recall anyone calling it a miracle hat."

"Indirectly some one did. If a hat can become a girl I certainly would call it a miracle hat."

### PROBABLY NOT



Kid (spying tight-wire walker)—Oh mother, why is that man walking on a rope 'way up there in the air? Mother (waiting at crossing)—Probably because he wasn't able to cross the street in any other way, dear.

### Live on Credit

Hope is the dope.  
Go woo and win it  
Who lives on hope  
May live on credit.

### Crashing the Party

"We have many natural-born orators."

"We have," answered Senator Sorghum. "The trouble with some of 'em is that they can't draw a crowd on their own account and want to take possession of an audience that some one else has assembled."—Washington Star.

### Familiar Incident

"Have you ever been up in an airship?"

"No," answered Senator Sorghum. "The publicity is no good. Things have gotten so that you're liable to get only half a column on an inside page, even if you fall out."—Washington Star.

### World Court?

Riggles—Does he bore you with his war stories?  
Raggles—Yes, martial, not martial.

### NEVER OUT AT NIGHT



Salesman—Let me sell you some nightshirts.

Old Timer—No—never go out at night.

### Busy Smithy

Beneath the spreading chestnut tree  
The smith works like the deuce;  
For now he's selling gasoline,  
Hot dogs and orange juice.

### His Misfortune

She (with magazine)—What a miserable writer Shakespeare was. Look at his signature.

He—Well, I suppose we shouldn't criticize the poor beggar. He didn't have our educational advantages, you know.

### Almost Finished

Mrs. Guaggs—This is the end. I can live with you no longer.

Mr. Guaggs—Yes, I guess it's all over but the shooting.

### Well Prepared

She—And you escaped from the Russian prison? And you escaped through a hole which you dug in the wall with a fork?

He—Yes, you see it was quite easy. My wife wasn't much of a cook.

### Time for Fairy Tale

Black—What do they mean by the "witching hour?"

White—Don't you know? That's the hour when the wife greets you with, "Which story is it this time?"

### Stable Man Showed Grim Sense of Humor

Add to the true but trying stories of the week the case of the young lady who was most anxious to reach her gentleman friend posthaste. Knowing him to be an ardent horseman and confident that he was riding at the moment, she besought the telephone Red Book. With no more information than the fact that he rode a mount named Molly, she proceeded to query academy after academy.

Eventually, success was to be hers. Nearing the end of her list of numbers, her impatient "hello" was answered by a gruff-voiced stable man. "Is this the Park academy?" she asked.

"Yep," answered the voice. "Well, have you a horse named Molly?"

The answer shocked her into speechlessness.

"Sure," said the gruff one. "Shall I bring 'er to the phone?"—Detroit Free Press.

### Prince's Simple Life on Ranch in Calgary

The prince of Wales, so they say, is developing an American accent. Seven years of annual association with the cowhands and neighboring ranchers at Calgary, Alberta, where he is owner of the EP ranch, have erased much of his carefully cultivated Oxford enunciation and substituted the drawl of the American Northwest.

The British royal heir even jokes about the change in his speech. A favorite story with him is one in which an American acquaintance explains that the difference between a ranch and a "ranch" is that "a ranch pays and a 'ranch' doesn't."

"But everybody in Calgary knows that the prince runs a ranch and not a 'ranch,'" says Chief Long Lance, a neighbor. "By 8:30 every morning he has breakfast and is out inspecting his cattle and barns. One of his chores is hauling manure in a wheelbarrow."—Los Angeles Times.

### Color War in Edinburgh

Following the refusal of some restaurants to admit Asiatic and African residents, not because of their conduct, but because of their racial origin, Edinburgh has a color war that has gotten into the house of commons. The secretary for Scotland was asked to take steps, by legislation or otherwise, to stop the discrimination, and he replied that he did not have the power to intervene and did not think legislation along the line suggested would be practicable. A delegation of students representing the Edinburgh Indian association protested recently to the lord provost of Edinburgh, and the members of the organization refused to take part in the recent charity pageant.

### His Experience

"Well, sir," said Dad Drizale, "the children had got to playing around, the whole darn ten of 'em, I reckon. I wasn't paying no pertickler attention when I heered an almighty yell, and over the fence comes a helper, blating for gosh' sake with three, four arrers sticking out of her body. I gives another yell and darted into the house for my gun, hollering 'Injuns! Injuns!' at every jump. I hadn't been off'n the place for so long I'd forgot there wasn't no Injuns no more and just nacherly didn't suspicion the children a-tall."—Kansas City Star.

### His Viewpoint

"A very promising young man," we said. "He will do big things."  
"We have too thundering many 'going-to-doers' now," said old Festus Pester. "What we need are not men that are going to do, but those that have already done—we need 'didders,' not 'going-to-doers' or 'might-have-doers!' Hurrumph!"—Kansas City Star.

### Clothes Outgrown

Wearing the same clothes in which they were married 25 years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Dow, of Dayton, Maine, held a reception at their home. The wedding garments were the chief interest, for most of the guests admitted they could not get into the clothes they wore a quarter of a century ago, even if they had them.—Indianapolis News.

### Still Going Strong

Mrs. Brown—Do you think they are rich?  
Mrs. Jones—Of course they are rich; they're still using last year's car.

### Odd Number

Diner—The price for four pigs' feet is only 30 cents. Why are you charging me 60 cents for just five?  
Waiter—Because that forced us to kill another pig, sir.

Dun—the future tense of due.



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### Compensation

Susceptible Policeman (bowed over by fair motorist)—My fault, miss. I ought to 'ave stepped back.

Girl—There, now! If you're not just the sweetest constable I've ever struck.—London Opinion.

When a gossip says "it's all over town," the gossip means that it soon will be.

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