



## ***Parson Weems' Account of the Battle of Monmouth, 1809.***

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On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, the British army, now under the command of Clinton, evacuated Philadelphia for New-York. The figure they made on the road had something of the air of the sublime; for their baggage, loaded horses, and carriages, formed a line not less than twelve miles in length. General Washington, whose eye, like that of the sacred dragon, was always open and fixed upon the enemies of America, immediately crossed the Delaware after them—pushed on detached corps to obstruct their advance—gall their flanks—and fall on their rear, while he himself moved on with the main body of the army. By the 27<sup>th</sup>, Clinton had advanced as far as Monmouth, and Washington's troops were close on his flank and rear. Next morning, General Lee, with 5,000 men, was ordered to begin the attack: Washington moving on briskly to support him. But, as he advanced, to his infinite astonishment he met Lee retreating, and the enemy pursuing. "For God's sake, General Lee," said Washington with great warmth, "what's the cause of this ill-tim'd prudence."

"No man, sir," replied Lee, quite convulsed with rage, "can boast a larger portion of that rascally virtue than your Excellency!!"

Dashing along by the madman, Washington rode up to his troops, who at sight of him rent the air with "God save great Washington!"

"My brave fellows," said he, "can you fight?"

They answered with 3 cheers! "Then face about, my heroes, and charge."—This order was executed with infinite spirit. The enemy, finding themselves now warmly opposed in front, made an attempt to turn his left flank, but were gallantly attacked and driven back. They then made a rapid push to the right, but the brave Greene, with a choice body of troops and artillery, repulsed them with considerable slaughter. At the same instant, Wayne advanced with his legion, and poured in so severe and well directed a fire, that the enemy were glad to regain their defiles. Morgan's rifles distinguished themselves that day. Washington and his heroes lay upon their arms all night, resolved to fall on the enemy the moment they should attempt their retreat next morning. But during the night they moved off in silence, and got such a start that Washington thought it dangerous, in such hot weather, to make a push after them. The Americans lost 58 killed—140 wounded. The British had 249 killed, and the wounded in

proportion. Numbers, on both sides, died of the extreme heat, and by drinking cold water.

Source: Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of Washington*, ed. Marcus Cunliffe (Cambridge, 1962), 99-100.