

# *The Blacksmith at Brandywine*

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North American

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*Intermediate*  
*2 min read*

Terrible in the field at Brandywine was the figure of a man armed only with a hammer, who plunged into the ranks of the enemy, heedless of his own life, yet seeming to escape their shots and sabre cuts by magic, and with Thor strokes beat them to the earth. But yesterday war had been to him a distant rumor, a thing as far from his cottage at Dilworth as if it had been in Europe, but he had revolted at a plot that he had overheard to capture Washington and had warned the general. In revenge the Tories had burned his cottage, and his wife and baby had perished in the flames. All day he had sat beside the smoking ruins, unable to weep, unable to think, unable almost to suffer, except dumbly, for as yet he could not understand it. But when the drums were heard they roused the tiger in him, and gaunt with sleeplessness and hunger he joined his countrymen and ranged like Ajax on the field. Every cry for quarter was in vain: to every such appeal he had but one reply, his wife's name—Mary.

Near the end of the fight he lay beside the road, his leg broken, his flesh torn, his life ebbing from a dozen wounds. A wagoner, hasting to join the American retreat, paused to give him drink. "I've only five minutes more of life in me," said the smith. "Can you lift me into that tree and put a rifle in my hands?" The powerful

teamster raised him to the crotch of an oak, and gave him the rifle and ammunition that a dying soldier had dropped there. A band of red-coats came running down the road, chasing some farmers. The blacksmith took careful aim; there was a report, and the leader of the band fell dead. A pause; again a report rang out, and a trooper sprawled upon the ground. The marksman had been seen, and a lieutenant was urging his men to hurry on and cut him down. There was a third report, and the lieutenant reeled forward into the road, bleeding and cursing. "That's for Mary," gasped the blacksmith. The rifle dropped from his hands, and he, too, sank lifeless against the boughs.

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