

inations. I will merely say that the fact that we can suggest our own syllabuses is no answer to my contention. What is to happen to the candidate who for some reason fails to pass at school and wishes to enter for the matriculation examination again in September? Apparently he would have to offer the Board's own syllabus.

Yours truly,

1846.

[There is nothing to prevent "1846" from sending marked copies of HISTORY to all the members of the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board. We would only point out that the amount of memory work required depends upon the nature of the examination papers, and not upon the length or number of the periods set. It is as easy to demand an excessive number of facts and dates in a paper covering half a century as in one covering a thousand years.—ED.]

HISTORICAL REVISIONS.

XIII.—THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN.

THE cult of the centenary has perhaps been overdone, but all teachers of history are grateful that the celebrations of the six hundredth anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn resulted in two re-studies of the incidents of that memorable encounter which compelled us to revise our whole conceptions of the tactics of the fight and to place its site in a new locality. Our chief debt of gratitude is to Mr. W. M. Mackenzie, then a schoolmaster in Glasgow, who, after several years devoted to the examination of the battle, published in 1913 his *Battle of Bannockburn*, which from the first convinced many of his readers that his radical reconstruction of the fight was on right lines. Further conviction came when in 1914 Dr. J. E. Morris, of Bedford, whose long services as treasurer to the Historical Association are familiar to all readers of HISTORY, published his "Centenary Monograph" of Bannockburn, in which he supported Mr. Mackenzie's thesis by a careful study of the whole campaign and by putting together with admirable clearness the chief passages of the chronicles relevant to the subject. Written from a southern standpoint rather than from the Scottish point of view of his predecessor, Dr. Morris corroborated in all essentials the position laid down by Mr. Mackenzie. It is to these two gentlemen that we owe the fact that there is a need for the teacher to revise his estimate of Bannockburn. And the teacher will do it the more readily since our new information has been furnished by two hard-working schoolmasters. School teachers have sometimes been reproached for making few contributions to historical learning. The example of these two scholars shows that the charge must itself be revised.

Unluckily the centenary celebrations of June, 1914, were followed hard upon by the outbreak of the great war. For four years and

more Scots and English had something more practical to do than to fight their ancient battles over again. The result has been that not quite enough attention perhaps has been drawn to the reconstitution of the history of the battle by Mr. Mackenzie and Dr. Morris. In particular the majority of text-books continue to tell the story of the fight on the ancient lines. Now it is one thing to suggest a new point of view; it is another thing to feel so convinced of its truth that one feels impelled to adopt a new view in a text-book, which, being compelled to teach categorically, does not allow for the qualifications and reservations which we expect to find in a book addressed to scholars. But the new view of Bannockburn, as expressed by Mr. Mackenzie and Dr. Morris, has now been before the world for more than seven years. Its validity has never to my knowledge been seriously contested, and consideration of it has certainly strengthened its claim to our acceptance. I for one am convinced that the time has come when it ought to be taught in every school where the history of this great turning point of military and political history is studied. I make no claim to have added anything to what these two writers have advanced. But I can claim that visiting the traditional field, so far back as 1909, I went away troubled that the ground was such that no cavalry action on a large scale was possible upon it. But other matters drove the thing out of my head, and I regret that subsequently I perpetrated more than one restatement of the old story. However, as early as 1913, I proclaimed my conviction that Mr. Mackenzie was working on right lines. After waiting in vain all these years for any serious attempt to restate the ancient view, I have, in recent revisions of my school books, retold the story on the lines of Mr. Mackenzie and Dr. Morris. I write now, not so much to justify my adopting their version for school use, as to call the attention of teachers to the importance of the revision made by these two scholars, and my strong belief that the new version is as near the truth as the details of any mediæval battle can well be expected to be.

Two questions now suggest themselves. There is first the problem of the site of the battle; there is secondly the problem of the tactics employed. When the first is settled, the second becomes an easy matter.

The circumstances under which Bannockburn was fought are well known. An English army, pledged to relieve the siege of Stirling by St. John's Day, was so unready for its work that it was not until June 23rd, St. John's eve, that it reached the south bank of the little stream called the Bannock, some three miles south of Stirling. Robert Bruce had gathered a large force of Scots to resist its advance; had massed them under cover of the woods that then clothed the uplands, at the foot of which the road from the south makes its way over the Bannock towards Stirling. He had prepared the north bank of the stream with some sort of rude fortifications, including perhaps rows of pits covered with hurdles, which would give way before the rush of the English horse. But his chief defence was the rough and difficult nature of the ground, which was one almost impossible for the effective execution of the charge of mailed horsemen, on which the English still placed their main reliance. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the English plunged through the brook, evaded its bogs, and swarmed up the steep banks beyond. It was natural that they fell into confusion and that the Scots gained an easy victory.

There is absolutely no ancient authority for locating the battle on this site. Those who do so follow what is regarded as ancient tradition, a tradition which has given fancy names to various spots and imagined that the battle was waged round them. But this so-called tradition only goes back to the eighteenth century, and is not so much real local tradition as the imagination of patriotic antiquaries. Edward II. was a wretched general, but he was not foolish enough to fall into such a trap as that. Instead of rushing blindly at a strong defensive position, it looks as if, despairing of the success of a frontal attack, he sent some of his troops over the Bannock some mile or so lower down, at a place where the stream has quitted the upland, and begins to wind through the low-lying and water-logged *carse*. His motive was to outflank the Scots, and to raise the siege of Stirling by establishing communication with the beleaguered garrison. He succeeded in the latter task, for we have a considerable chain of testimony that he joined hands with the castle garrison. He was less successful in the former, for in two small actions fought on June 23rd the Scots gained decided success over small detachments of his troops. But he seems, despite this check, to have brought all his troops over the Bannock. Not only Barbour, who wrote nearly two generations later, but Grey, the author of the *Scalacronica*, whose father fought in the battle, agree that the English crossed the stream and spent the night to the north of it on the *carse*. In effecting this manœuvre, however, Edward put his troops in a position of great danger. They held the triangle whose two long sides were the lines of the Forth and Bannock, and whose base was the wooded upland where lay the Scots under ample cover and safe protection. Defeat in such a position was likely to involve the loss of the army; and only the proud conviction of the English that their horsemen were sure to ride down any attack of Scottish footmen justified such a rash action. But the English were exhausted by a long march, discouraged by two partial defeats, destitute of competent direction, and worn out by the fatigue of taking up their new position. They spent a wretched night on the waterlogged *carse*; they feared an attack of the Scots; and the sun of a midsummer morning shone on a dispirited and timid host.

Bruce now took a bold resolution. Instead of retreating westward into the Highland hills, he resolved to march out of his strong position and approach the English so closely as to compel them to fight where they were encamped. It was an unheard-of thing for infantry to provoke cavalry to battle, but Bruce's soldiers were not mere lightly armed infantry, like the Welsh and Irish pikemen, but, like the Flemish soldiers of Courtrai, were well disciplined, armed, and equipped, and eager to win a victory for the national cause. Technically, they were *armati*, as the Monk of Malmesbury calls them, if not *homines armorum*. That is to say, if not so expensively equipped or heavily armed as the ordinary English trooper, they were men competent to take their place in the fighting line, and when massed in close formation able to resist cavalry. And it was no secret to a good soldier that dismounted men at arms could hold their own in close formation against the fierce rush of the disorderly charge of feudal cavalry. Mr. Mackenzie thinks that the Scots on foot actually charged the English horse. This is neither a necessary nor a probable hypothesis. They had done enough when

they came so near as to force the English to make an attack upon them. Accordingly, as the Scots approached the English camp, the English mounted their horses and prepared to meet their foes. But their leaders were quarrelling for precedence; they had no real general at their head; they ignored the lesson of Edward I.'s later battles that the Scottish squares or *schiltrons* could only be broken through by flights of missiles; they rushed against the Scots as if charging a thick wood; they failed to penetrate their ranks, and were soon thrown into confusion.

Then the fatal choice of the field came home to the vanquished. To the north the Forth barred their retreat; to the south the Bannock was a less formidable, but still a dangerous obstacle. Many were drowned in the river; more were captured and held up to ransom. Some, including Edward himself, sought protection from Stirling Castle, but the constable, aware that he was pledged to surrender, and unwilling that his King should share his fate, refused to admit him. As the result of this rebuff, Edward was forced to make his way from the field by circuitous routes. The whole army was dissolved, and not only Stirling, but Scotland, was Bruce's reward of victory.

Such is the story of Bannockburn as it may be pieced out of the best English chronicles, notably, *Scalacronica*, the north-country *Annals of Lanercost*, and the so-called Monk of Malmesbury. Barbour, though not quite so good an authority for details as Mr. MacKenzie is inclined to think, substantially corroborates their story, notably in locating the battle in the *carse*. When this site is once admitted, the rest is easy. We simply have to adjust the story as usually told to the true *terrain* on which the battle was fought. But what was unintelligible on the banks of the upper Bannock becomes easy when told of the new site. Nor need the alleged swampy character of the ground disturb us. If ever the *carse* were dry enough for fighting, it would be so at midsummer.

The new story of Bannockburn does not do much to alter the impression of the incompetence of the English army, which comes out in any version of the battle. This was, on every showing, so patent that there is no question of national prejudice, no rival English and Scottish versions of the great fight. But the narrative, as now read in the light of both English and Scottish sources, does immensely emphasise the skill of Bruce as a general. It is the essence of a good commander to know when to run risks. Bruce knew when to venture everything, and had his reward in the monarchy of an independent Scotland.

T. F. Tout