

The History of Stirlingshire

Chapter X. Battle of Bannockburn (1314)

Edward II. kept up the same claim upon the kingdom of Scotland which his father had begun; and, after several unsuccessful attempts to establish it, he resolved to make a great effort, and, with one blow, entirely to reduce a nation that, by its turbulence, had given such trouble to his father and himself. Having borrowed considerable sums from his monasteries, to defray the expenses of so important an expedition, he assembled, in the spring of 1314, the most numerous army that had ever crossed the borders, composed of different nations, and amounting to above 100,000 effective men, besides a huge multitude of attendants, who came in the hope of sharing in the plunder. Historians inform us that this vast host was composed not only of all the crown-vassals in England, Ireland, and Wales, with their military tenants, who, in consequence of a summons attended their sovereign; but of great numbers of foreign troops who had been transported from Flanders, and all the English provinces in France, besides many Scots who were disaffected to Bruce, and men of broken fortunes from many a corner, who had joined the army in expectation of obtaining lands in Scotland. Some make the whole amount to 300,000. Our northern minstrel in the "Lord of the Isles," has given a poetical charm even to the muster-roll of Edward's army.

"And not famed England's powers alone,
Renowned in arms, the summons own!
For Neustra's knights obeyed,
Gasconne hath lent her horsemen good,
And Cambria, but of late subdued,
Sent forth her mountain-multitude,
And Connoght poured from waste and wood
Her hundred tribes, whose sceptre rude
Dark Eth. O'Connor swayed."

Edward marched northward with uncommon ostentation, and in full confidence of victory; having ordered his fleet to attend him by sea with provisions, and appointed public prayers to be offered up in all the churches and monasteries of his dominions. These preparations did not terrify those against whom they were made.

Robert Bruce, grandson of Baliol's competitor, had been crowned King of Scotland by the Countess of Buchan, in 1306. Though hitherto he had been involved in perpetual war with England, and the party among the Scots who adhered to Baliol, and his successes checkered with greater losses, so that he had several times been reduced to the greatest extremities; still his vigour of mind and body had enabled him to sustain additional toil and hardship. Timeously informed of Edward's formidable preparations, he raised an army of 30,000, an armament which bore a small proportion to that of England. It was composed, however, of soldiers inured to war, and carrying on the sword's point liberty, honour, and everything dear to man. The Highlanders must have been numerous comparatively, for Bruce had ingratiated himself with almost all the chiefs. MacGregor had furnished the relic of St. Fillan, and is said to have fought bravely at Bannockburn. With this little force, Robert, taking his station near Stirling, waited for Edward. His first rendezvous was at Torwood, where he laid the plan of his operations in concert with his general officers, Edward his brother; Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, his nephew; Lord Walter, High Steward; and Sir James Douglas, who was afterwards employed to carry the heart of Robert the Bruce to the Holy Land. As he was killed, however, on the way, and his suite did not choose to proceed, his remains were brought back, and interred, with those of his ancestors, at Douglas. Bruce's heart was deposited neither in Jerusalem, where he had wished it to be, nor in Dumfermline, whither, from Cardross, in Dumbartonshire, his corpse had, with suitable pomp, been conveyed, but in Melrose Abbey.

The two armies first beheld each other in the month of June; and a fierce and bloody battle was soon after fought, in which the Scots obtained a victory, the most celebrated of any in the annals of their country. Although the union of the kingdoms have now rendered their former mutual contests matter rather of curiosity than serious concern; still the briefest of particulars of so great an action so near the door, cannot but be entertaining to the inhabitant of Stirlingshire. The historians of this singular affair often contradict each other, and assert local impossibilities. Buchanan, having long resided at Stirling, when preceptor of James VI., and had frequent opportunities of viewing the field, has given a distinct account of it. Casting our eye upon his history, and the fields which were the stage of this great transaction, we have, at one glance, the dispositions and motions of both armies.

The English host, having marched from Edinburgh to Falkirk in one day, set out next morning towards Stirling. Robert, being well informed of their motions, dispatched Sir James Douglas and Sir Robert Keith to reconnoitre them upon their march. These officers reported privately to the king, that it was the best arrayed, as well as the most numerous, army that he had ever seen, and pompous almost beyond expression. Policy led Bruce to conceal this report from his army. He ordered it, on the other hand, to be given out, that, though the enemy was numerous, it was not properly marshalled. The English, meanwhile, came in sight, and encamped on the north of Torwood. About Upper Bannockburn, and in the moor of Plean, in the neighbourhood of the ancient Roman causeway, pieces of broken pots, and other vessels, have been found; and, upon the rocks, near the surface, marks of fire have been discovered, where, as is supposed, the soldiers had cooked their provisions. Barbour, too, speaks as if their camp had stretched so far north, as to occupy part of the carse. So vast a multitude must doubtless have covered a large tract of country.

The Scottish army had, some days before, drawn nearer Stirling, and posted themselves in ground previously chose, behind the small stream of the Bannock, remarkable for its steep and rugged banks. They occupied several small eminences, and upon the summit of one of these, now called Brock's Brae – i.e. badger's acclivity – is a stone marking the ground where Bruce planted the royal standard, and near which his pavilion was erected. The space, or hole rather, in which the "Bored Stone" rests, is about 3 feet square, and has been roofed with an iron grating for protection against the picking propensities of pilgrims. But on the 25th June, 1877, the erection of a neat and substantial flagstaff, by the Dunbarton and Stirling Rock of Hope Lodge of Oddfellows, was inaugurated here with great ceremony. A foundation having been built on the solid rock, half-a-dozen yards west from the Bored Stone, for the necessary structure to receive the staff, on this had been bolted a malleable iron mainmast (hollow), rising to a height of 70 feet, and weighing 3 tons. It has been screwed down at the base with malleable iron plates; while the whole fixings of the mast have been covered with a solid and elegant cast-iron covering, decorated with Scotch thistles. The upper mast, which is of Baltic pine, is 50 feet long. Surmounting the whole, as a vane, there is a battle axe, with a malleable iron spire, and blade of block tin. The entire height of the erection is 120 feet. The Times did rather an undignified thing when it headed its report of this memorial of a famous historical event, "A snub to England." As well might it accuse the Greeks of bad taste for erecting a similarly-spirited work to mark Thermopylae. The prospect from the bald eminence is exactly what might be looked for. In almost every direction we have the survey of a fine sweep of country, with many objects patriotically revered to deepen the interest of the view. Northwards, Stirling castle, sitting proudly with towers and ramparts, on its everlasting rock, and the Wallace monument, stand out boldly in the landscape; while more immediately west is the Gillies' Hill, capped with a solitary tree, which, in the undulating distance, has all the appearance of a huge umbrella. From a situation so commanding, we naturally get at a glance the whole range of the ground occupied by the hostile armies. Thus they lay facing each other, at a mile's distance, with the streamlet running in a narrow valley between them.

Stirling Castle was still in the hands of the English. Edward Bruce had, in the preceding spring, besieged it for several months; but, finding himself unable to reduce it, had abandoned the enterprise. By a treaty, however, between Edward and Philip Moubray, the governor, it was agreed that, if the garrison had received no relief from England before St. John the Baptist's Day, 24th June, they should then surrender to the Scots, Robert was much dissatisfied with his brother; but, to save his honour, at last confirmed the treaty. Edward was distinguished for vigorous measures. The following anecdote, as related by Lord Hailes, the distinguished annalist of Scotland, justifies the line,

"And fiery Edward routed stout St. John."

John de St. John, with 15,000 horse, had advanced to oppose the inroad of the Scots. By a forced march, he endeavoured to surprise them, but intelligence of his motion was timeously received. The courage of Edward Bruce, approaching to temerity, frequently enabled him to achieve what men of more judicious valour would never have attempted. He ordered the infantry, and the meaner sort of his army, to entrench themselves in strong narrow ground. He himself, with fifty horsemen well harnessed, issued forth under cover of a thick mist, surprised the English on their march, attacked and dispersed them. When blamed by Robert for his rash treaty with Moubray, "Let all England come," exclaimed Edward, "we will fight them were they more."

The day before the battle, a fine body of cavalry, to the number of 800, was detached from the English camp, under the conduct of Lord Clifford, to the relief of the castle. These, having marched through low grounds, upon the edge of the carse, had passed the Scottish army on their left before they were observed. The king himself was the first to perceive them; and, desiring the Earl of Moray, who commanded the left wing, to turn his eyes towards the quarter where they were making their appearance, in the crofts of St. Ninians, said to him, angrily, "Thoughtless man! you have suffered the enemy to pass." Moray, feeling severely, instantly pursued them with 500 foot; and, coming up with them in the plain, where the village of Newhouse now stands, commenced a sharp action in sight of both armies, and of the castle. Randolph's party, who had been drawn up in a circular form, with their spears protended, and resting on the ground, were briskly attacked and surrounded by the enemy. Much valour was displayed on both sides; and it was some time doubtful who should be victorious. Robert, attended by several of his general officers, witnessed this rencounter from Cockshot Hill. Douglas, seeing the distress of his brave friend, who was greatly inferior to the enemy in numbers, asked leave to go with a reinforcement to his support. This the king at first refused; but, upon his afterwards consenting, Douglas put his soldiers in motion. Perceiving, however, on the way, that Randolph was on the point of victory, he stopped short, that they who had long fought so hard might enjoy undivided glory. The English were entirely defeated, with great slaughter. Among the slain was Sir Gilzame de Ainecourt, a knight and commander of great renown, who had fallen in the beginning of the action. The loss of the Scots amounted to one man slain. Randolph and his company, covered with dust and glory, returned to the camp, amidst acclamations of joy. To perpetuate the memory of the victory, two large stones were erected in the field, where they are still to be seen. The spot was ultimately inclosed for a garden. It is at the north end of the village of Newhouse, about a quarter of a mile from the South Port of Stirling.

This victory gave new spirits to the army, and raised so great an ardour for a general engagement, that the night, though one of the shortest, seemed long to them.

"It was a night of lovely June,
High rode in cloudless blue the moon,
Demyat smiled beneath her ray.
Old Stirling's towers arose in light,
And, twined in links of silver bright,
Her winding river lay.
Ah, gentle planet! other sight
Shall greet thee next returning night."

Edward, too, exasperated at the defeat of his detachment, and perceiving the disadvantageous impression it was likely to make upon his army, was resolved to bring it to a general action next day. All was early in motion on both sides. Religious sentiments in the Scots were mingled with military fire. A solemn mass was pronounced by Maurice, abbot of Inchaffray, afterward the king's confessor; who also administered the sacrament to the king, and the chief officers about him, while inferior priests did the same to the rest of the army. Then, after a sober repast, they formed in order of battle, in a tract of ground, now called Nether Touchadam, which lies along the declivity of a gently rising hill, about a mile due south from Stirling castle. This situation had been previously chosen on account of its advantages. Upon the right, they had a range of steep rocks, whither the baggage-men had retired, and which, from this circumstance, has been called Gillies' or Servants' Hill. In their front, were the steep banks of the rivulet of Bannock. Upon the left lay a morass, now called Milton Bog, from its vicinity to a small village of that name. Much of this bog is still undrained; and part of it is now a mill-pond. As it was then the middle of summer, it was almost quite dry; but Robert had recourse to a stratagem, to prevent any attack from that quarter. He had, some time before, ordered pits, about a foot in breadth, and two feet deep, to be dug in the morass, and fields on the left, and covered with green turf, supported by stakes, so as to exhibit the appearance of firm ground. He also had calthorps scattered there; some of which have been found within the present century. By these means, together with the natural strength of the ground, the Scottish army stood as within an entrenchment.

Some historians tell us, that Robert rendered even the rays of the sun subservient to his advantage, having drawn up his army in such a position, that the enemy, fighting, would have their motions embarrassed by dazzled eyes. Be that as it may, the Scottish line, no doubt, extended in a north-easterly direction from the brook of Bannock, where their right flank would be covered effectually, to the village of St. Ninians, probably in the line of the present road from Stirling to Kilsyth. The military advantages of this position were obvious, as the English could not pass the Scottish army, and move towards Stirling, without exposing their flank to be attacked, while in march. If, on the other hand, the Scottish line had been drawn up east and west, and facing to the southward, as affirmed by Buchanan, and adopted by Mr. Nimmo, there appears nothing to have prevented the English approaching upon the carse, or level ground, from Falkirk, either from turning the Scottish left flank, or from passing their position, if they preferred it, without coming to action, and moving on to the relief of Stirling. The Gillies' Hill, if this less probable hypothesis be adopted, would be situated not in the rear, as allowed by all historians, but upon the right flank of Bruce's army. And, again: many English, at the close of the battle, ran to the castle, or the Forth, which they must have done through the victorious line, had it been drawn up from east to west.

Barbour, who lived near those times, mentions a park with trees, through which the English had to pass, before they could attack the Scots; and says, that Robert chose this situation, that, besides other advantages, the trees might prove an impediment to the enemy's cavalry. The improvements of agriculture and various works have, in the lapse of five hundred years, much altered the face of this, as well as other parts of the country. Vestiges, however, of this park still remain. Many stumps of trees are seen all around the field where the battle was fought. A farm-house, situated almost in the middle, goes by the name of "the Park;" and a mill built upon the south bank of the rivulet, nearly opposite to where the centre of Robert's army stood, goes by the name of Parkhill.

The Scottish army was drawn up in three divisions, and their front extended near a mile in length, along the bank of the river. The right, which was upon the highest grounds, was commanded by Edward Bruce, the king's brother. The left was posted on the low grounds, near the morass, under the direction of Randolph, and the king himself took charge of the centre. Mention is also made of a fourth division, commanded by Walter, Lord High Steward, and Sir James Douglas, both of whom had been knighted that morning by their sovereign.

The enemy were fast approaching in three great bodies, led on by the English monarch in person, and by the Earls of Hereford and Gloucester, who were ranked among the best generals that England could then produce. Their centre was formed of infantry, and the wings of cavalry, many of whom were armed cap-a-pee – a capite ad pedem, from head to foot. Squadrons of archers were also planted upon the wings, and at certain distances along the front. Edward was attended by two knights, Sir Giles de Argentine and Sir Aymer de Vallance, who rode, according to the phrase of those days, at his bridle. That monarch, who had imagined that the Scots would never face his formidable host, was much astonished when he beheld their order and determined resolution to give him battle. As he expressed his surprise, Sir Ingram Umfraville took the opportunity of suggesting a plan likely to ensure a cheap and bloodless victory. He counselled him to make a feint of retreating with the whole army, till they had got behind their tents; and, as this would tempt the Scots from their ranks for the sake of plunder, to turn about suddenly, and fall upon them. The counsel was rejected. Edward thought there was no need of stratagem to defeat so small a handful.

Among the other occurrences of this memorable day, historians mention an incident. As the two armies were on the point of engaging, the Abbot of Inchaffray posted himself before the Scots, with a crucifix in his hand; when they all fell down upon their knees in the act of devotion. The enemy, observing them in so uncommon a posture, concluded that they were frightened into submission, and that, by kneeling, when they should have been ready to fight, they meant to surrender at discretion, and only begged their lives. They were soon undeceived. They saw them rise, and, with a steady countenance, stand to arms.

"And when the English king had sight
Of them kneeling, he said in hie,
Yon folk kneeleth to ask mercy.
Sir Ingram said, Ye say sooth now,
They ask mercy, but none at yow;
For their trespass to God they cry.
I tell thee a thing sickerly,
That yon men will all win or die,
For doubt of dead, they will not flee."

The English began the action, by a vigorous charge upon the left wing, commanded by Randolph, near the spot where the bridge is now thrown over the river, at the village of Chartershall. Its neighbourhood was the only place where the river could be passed in any sort of order. A large body of cavalry advanced to attack in front, while another made a circuit to fall upon the flank and rear. Ere, however, they could come to close engagement, they fell into the snare that had been laid for them; many of their horses were soon disabled by the sharp irons rushing into their feet; other tumbled into the concealed pits, and could not disentangle themselves. Pieces of harness, with bits of broken spears, and other armour, were even lately dug up in the bog. Randolph well knew how to improve an accident which he had expected. Taking immediate advantage of the disorder and surprise into which it had thrown the enemy, he charged with vigour. The battle was, meanwhile, spreading along the front, and maintained with much valour on both sides.

An incident happened at the outset, which, however small in itself, led to important consequences. King Robert, according to Barbour, was ill mounted, carrying a battle-axe, and, on his bassinet-helmet, wearing, for distinction, a crown. Thus externally distinguished, he rode before the lines, regulating their order, when an English knight, who was ranked amongst the bravest in Edward's army, Sir Henry de Boun, came galloping furiously up to him, to engage him in single combat, expecting, by this act of chivalry, to end the contest and gain immortal fame. But the enterprising champion, having missed his blow, was instantly struck dead by the king, the handle of whose axe was broken with the violence of the shock. This was a signal for the charge. The heroic achievement performed by the king before their eyes had raised the spirits of the Scots to the highest pitch. They rushed furiously upon the enemy, and met with a warm reception. The ardour of one of the Scottish divisions had carried them too far, and occasioned their being sorely galled by a large body of English archers, who charged them in flank. These, however, were soon dispersed by Sir Robert Keith Marischal, whom the king had dispatched with five hundred horse. A strong body of the enemy's cavalry charged the right wing, which Edward Bruce commanded, with such irresistible fury that he had been quite overpowered, had not Randolph, who appears to have been then unemployed, marched to his assistance. The battle was now at the hottest, and it was yet uncertain how the day should go. The English continued to charge with unabated vigour. The Scots received them with an inflexible intrepidity, each individual fighting as if victory had depended on his single arm. An occurrence, which some represent as an accidental sally of patriotic enthusiasm, others as a premeditated stratagem of Robert's, suddenly altered the face of affairs, and contributed greatly to victory. Above fifteen thousand servants and attendants of the Scottish army had been ordered, before the battle, to retire with the baggage behind the adjoining hill; but having during the engagement arranged themselves in a martial form, some on foot, and others mounted on baggage-horses, they marched to the top, and displaying, on long poles, white sheets instead of banners, descended towards the field with hideous shouts. The English, taking them for a fresh reinforcement of the foe, were seized with so great a panic that they gave way in great confusion. Buchanan says that the English king was the first that fled, but contradicts all other historians, who affirm that Edward was among the last in the field. Nay, according to some accounts, he would not be persuaded to retire till Aymer de Vallance, seeing the day lost, took hold of his bridle and led him off. Sir Giles de Argentine, the other knight who waited on Edward, would not consent to leave the ground, but putting himself at the head of a battalion, and making a vigorous effort to retrieve the disastrous state of affairs, was soon overpowered and slain. He was a champion of high renown, and having signalized himself in several battles with the Saracens, was reckoned the third knight of his day. Baston thus feelingly laments the fall of this noble ancestor of the dukes of Gordon –

"Nobilis argentem, pugil inclyte, dulcis Egidi,
Vix Scieram mentem cum te succumbere vidi."

The Scots pursued, and made great havoc among the enemy, especially in passing the river, where, from the irregularity of the ground, they could not preserve the smallest order. A mile from the field of battle, a small bit of ground goes by the name of Bloody Fold; where, according to tradition, a party of the English faced about and made a stand, but, after sustaining a dreadful slaughter, were forced to continue their flight. This account corresponds to several histories of the Earl of Gloucester. Seeing the rout of his countrymen, he made an effort to renew the battle, at the head of his military tenants, and, after having personally done much execution, was, with most of his party, cut to pieces. The Scots, it is said, would have spared his life, had they known him; but he had neglected to wear his surcoat with armorial bearings over his armour, and thus fell unknown, after his horse had been pierced with spears.

Much valour was displayed on both sides; and the victory brought the greater honour to the Scots, that it had been obtained, not over an ill-disciplined multitude, as some represent the English to have been, but a regular and well-marshalled army, who had fought both with courage and skill.

Perhaps there is not an instance of a battle, in which the exact numbers of killed and wounded have been correctly ascertained. The ordinary method is, for each side to lessen its own loss, and augment that of the enemy. Though the English writers do not specify particulars, they acknowledge it to have been very great, and that their nation never met with such an overthrow. The Scottish writers make the enemy's loss, in the battle and pursuit, fifty thousand, and their own four thousand. Of the latter, Sir William Wepont and Sir Walter Ross were the only persons of distinction. A proportion almost incredible! The slain on the English side were all decently interred by Robert's order, who, even in the heat of victory could not refrain from shedding tears over several who had been his intimate friends. The corpse of the Earl of Gloucester was carried that night to the church of St. Ninians, where it lay, till, together with that of Lord Clifford, it was sent to the English monarch. The number of prisoners also was very great; and amongst them were many of high rank, who were treated with the utmost civility.

The remains of the vanquished were scattered all over the country. Many ran to the castle; and not a few, attempting the Forth, were drowned. The Earl of Hereford, the surviving general, retreated with a large body towards Bothwell, and threw himself, with a few of the chief officers, into the castle, which was garrisoned by the English. Being hard pressed, he surrendered, and was soon exchanged against Robert's queen and daughter, and some others of his friends, who had been captive eight years in England.

King Edward escaped with much difficulty. Retreating from the battle-field, he rode to the castle, but was told by the governor, that he could not long enjoy safety there, as it could not be defended against the victors. Taking a circuit to shun the vigilance of the Scots, he made the best of his way homeward, accompanied by fifteen noblemen, and a small body of cavalry. He was closely pursued above forty miles by Sir James Douglas, who, with a party of light horse, kept upon his rear, and was often very near him. How hard he was put to, may be guessed from a vow which he made in his flight, to build and endow a religious house in Oxford, should it please God to favour his escape. He was on the point of being made prisoner, when he was received into the castle of Dunbar by Gospatrick Earl of March, who was in the English interest. Douglas waited a few days in the neighbourhood, in expectation of his attempting to go home by land. He escaped, however, by sea, in a fisherman's boat. His stay at Dunbar had been very short. Three days after the battle, he issued a proclamation from Berwick, announcing the loss of his seal, and forbidding all persons to obey any order proceeding from it, without some other evidence of that order being his. Roger de Northburg, keeper of the king's signet (*custos targiae domini regis*), was made prisoner, with his two clerks, Roger de Wakenfelde, and Thomas de Switon. But the king caused another seal to be made, and entitled it his "privy seal," to distinguish it from the one so lost. The targia, or signet, was restored to England, through the intercession of Ralph de Monthermer, ancestor of the Marquis of Hastings. Edward's former confidence of success, and the manner of his escape, call to mind the ostentatious parade with which Xerxes invaded Greece, and the sorry plight in which he was compelled to retreat.

The castle of Stirling was next day surrendered, and the garrison allowed to pass unmolested to England, in terms of the treaty regarding it; but Moubray the governor was so won by the civilities of Robert, that he entered into his service, and ever after continued faithful to him.

In the morning after the battle, an English knight, and an old acquaintance of Robert's, Sir Marmaduke Twenge, came and surrendered. He was cordially received; and, after having been treated with great civility, was sent home not only without ransom, but loaded with presents. In a word, Bruce's whole behavior after his victory, revealed a greatness of soul, seldom found in conquerors. The horrors of war, so long familiar to him, had not extinguished the gentler affections. He lost no time, however, in directing the thunders of parliamentary censure against such part of his subjects as did not return to their natural allegiance after the battle. A voucher to this effect, dated 6th November, 1314, was issued from the monastery of Cambuskenneth, to which fifty seals were appended.

So sanguine was Edward of annihilating the Scots, by his superior strength numerically, that within the English camp, full of costly grandeur, sat Andrew Baston, the bard, who had been brought specially by his king to celebrate the slaughter of Scottish nationality. But things were not so to be. This Baston was a Carmelite monk, and, according to Bishop Bale, a laureated poet and public orator at Oxford. Like Gulielmus Peregrinus, he accompanied the king on his military expeditions, and took care to commemorate his master's exploits in suitable heroics. In this capacity he went with Edward I. to Scotland, in 1304, and, as the result of what he saw and experienced on various occasions there, gave to the world – at least to so many as were able to peruse the same – his "De Strivilniensi Obsidione" (Siege of Stirling Castle), "De Altero Scotorum," and other poems, some of which are still to be found in Fordun. Being part of the retinue that Edward II. took with him to the north, he was taken prisoner at the battle we have just sketched, and, by way of payment for his ransom, was ordered by Bruce to compose a poem in praise of the Scottish victory. This he did, in a monkish rhyme, consisting of barbarous jingle. Some historical facts, however, are confirmed by it. He mentions the pits and ditches which had been dug, the stakes that were fixed in them, and the calthrops. He gives a list, also, of the most distinguished of the English slain in the battle, and begins his poem thus: -

"De planetu cudo metrum cum carmine nudo,
Risum retrudo, dum tali themate ludo;
Rector coelestis, adhebens solamina maestis
Verax est testis, : &c.

A Scottish monk also composed a poem upon the same subject, in a strain nothing superior, though perhaps slightly more intelligible. We subjoin part of it, as another specimen of the uncouth poetry of that age, preserved by Fordun, who has himself written verses equally poor, and interspersed them in his history.

"M. semel et C. ter, semel X. J. jungito quarter.
Nato Baptista, nova gratia contigit ista,
Quod Rex Scotorum, peditum cum parte suorum,
Anglos prostravit, equites cum rege fugavit.
Rivulus est super hoc testis, cognomine Bannock,
In quo submersa jacuerunt corpora versa," &c.

A ballad likewise on the battle of Bannockburn was anciently composed in the Scottish language, and universally sung by women and children for several ages. The following fragment of it has been handed down to us.

"Maydens of England, sore may ye mourne,
For zour lemons, zou have lost at Bonockborne,
with hevalo.
What weend the King of England,
To have gotten Scotland,
with rummelo."

In the olden times, every king had his panegyrist, every earl his doting sycophant, and every lord his laureate. Phenomenal plenty made such literati the puppets of fortune. In the halls of the great they fed nobly, and held the gayest of revels; life was Elysium, and death ridiculously remote. Out of favour, they were penniless paupers, without a crust; sorrow and suicide stood alike spectres on either hand. Another turn of the wheel, and they vaulted again into their sumptuous slavery. Feasting and starvation, tapestried dormitories and the mendicant's mat, were the ruinous alternations of those unhappy lives. That was an age of dependence on patrons. But the last century was the last of that age. No man in literature now, be he great or small, thinks of a patron. The one patron of the nineteenth century is the public – a truer, juster, and more munificent patron than letters ever had before.

This battle of Bannockburn, forming one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of Scotland, was fought on Monday the 24th June, 1314. The victory was attended with the most important consequences. It established Robert firmly upon the throne, which, hitherto, he had always felt tottering beneath him; and settled throughout the kingdom a tranquillity formerly unknown. The extensive possessions in the West of Scotland belonging to Baliol, together with the estates of his partisans, who appear to have been more numerous than is commonly imagined, falling under forfeiture, gave the crown greater power than it formerly had possessed. Robert reserved some of these estates, and bestowed the rest upon his most trusty friends; who thus became attached to his government by a new tie. The reward bestowed upon Sir Robert Keith Mareschal, who, by dispersing with his cavalry, the enemy's archers, had so materially contributed to the success of the day, may be seen from the following passage in Robertson's Index of Charters. Charter by Robert I. "to Robert Keith, of the lands of Merschell, and the office of Merschellship, Keith,"(in the constabulary of Haddington and shire of Edinburgh), "Symone, Colbanstoun, Alneden in Buchan, with the new forest of Innerpeffer, four davache of land of Strathbogie, the forest of Kintoir, containand ase taillie." This charter confirmed by David II. It is not known to whom Leckie in Stirlingshire had formerly belonged; but, from Robertson's printed Index of Charters, it appears that the half of this estate nearest "Buchaun" was the private property of King Robert, and that he exchanged it with the Earl of Lennox for Cardross of Dunbartonshire.

The rich spoils also found in the English camp, greatly increased the national wealth. That people, sure of victory, had marched to it with all the parade of luxury; and on their defeat, money, plate, rich armour, sumptuous furniture, fine equipages, and all the riches of their camp, fell into the hands of the Scots. These, together with the large sums paid by prisoners of rank for their ransom, introduced a more plentiful circulation of money in Scotland than had ever been known. The effects soon became every where visible. Several large mansions where there had been none before, were, according to traditions still current, built after this battle. From that time, also, the Scots began to study more elegance in their houses and gardens, and give more attention to agriculture. For, however much they hated the English, and had been harassed by their unjust claims, they gradually adopted several of their customs, and found an advantage in cultivating various arts borrowed from them – resembling those nations whom the Romans had invaded; and who came gradually to imitate that people, and practise arts and customs, the first knowledge of which they had received from their enemies and oppressors.

But while this battle was emphatically the great achievement of Bruce's life, it must also be regarded as a victory which had really world-wide influence – thoroughly upsetting the sordid schemes of the English monarchs for the capture of France and Scotland, and affecting for the highest good the grander destinies of Europe. What could Knox have done for the fundamental fabric of the Reformation, without his kingly forerunners, Wallace and Bruce, yet unapproached for military prowess and disinterested patriotism?

Information from Electric Scotland