

been influenced by topographical feature. As an illustration of this connection, I may refer to the Battle of Bannockburn.¹ Many travellers who have visited the site of this conflict have felt some difficulty in understanding why the English army, so vastly superior in numbers, did not easily outflank the left wing of the Scots. At present the wide, fertile plain of the Carse, described in the foregoing chapter, stretches for miles to the north and south of the low plateau on which Bruce's forces were drawn up. A small body of the English cavalry did, indeed, make its way across the plain, until overtaken and cut to pieces by Randolph. But why was this force so easily dispersed, and why was no more formidable and persistent effort made by Edward to turn that left flank? It is very clear that had the topography been then what it is now, the Battle of Bannockburn must have had a far other ending.

The true explanation of the difficulty seems to me to be supplied by some almost casual references in Barbour's poem of *The Bruce*, wherein he gives so graphic an account of the battle. I do not mean to contend for the historical veracity of the Archdeacon of Aberdeen, though I think he hardly deserves the condemnation passed upon him by my friend, the late Mr. J. R. Green. As he was born only some two years after the battle, as he had travelled a good deal, and as the field of the conflict lay across the land route from the north to the south of Scotland, we may believe him to have made himself personally acquainted with the ground. At least, he could easily obtain information from many who had themselves been actors in the fight. Now the poet makes Bruce, in addressing his followers, allude to the advantage they would gain should the enemy attempt to pass by the morass beneath them. The narrative goes on

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, April 1887.