

Rev D DICK IMMORTAL MEMORY (1948).

Rev. David Dick, b. d., Stirling, formerly minister of Torthorwald, was the principal guest at the annual dinner of the Dumfries; Burns Howff Club, which was held in the Globe Inn, on Monday evening, and in proposing "The Immortal Memory", gave an eloquent appreciation of the poet as a great man in any age.

Mr. Dick said it was a tremendous honour the club had done him by inviting him to express for them and to call upon them to honour the toast at that anniversary festival on the sixtieth anniversary of the club. How could he approach that theme to express in suitable language their appreciation of the great National Bard of Scotland, whose spirit still haunted the very place in which they were gathered that night, whose spirit had also gone out to enrich and inspire the whole world and mankind. He would begin 'by asking them if they would allow him simply to express his own thought and he hoped that these thoughts would express suitably their thoughts on that occasion.

They were gathered together in that spirit of fellowship and brotherhood which was at the very center of Burns's soul. He could found bachelor societies. He who could associate himself with the masonic fraternity, yet knew there was a wider brotherhood to which all men might be called. He had that primitive herd instinct that was innate in every living human being, so primitive, so simple, an yet so real, that any man who did not love the company of his fellow men was not truly human. So that night they were gathered to do honour to Rabbie Burns. His theme might be along the lines of revelation and inspiration, and coming from the lips of a minister, perhaps it was not out of place and might be the sub—title. Against that background he would say to them quite definitely that he had discovered Rabble Burns to be the poet of life, life as one and indivisible. So he came to them that night as a crony with them, that they might do reverence and honour to the memory of their great bard, and to take inspiration from all that he did for Scotland and for the world, as they went forward into the unknown days of the future. t'herefore he would say to them they could not appreciate Burns unless they realised what the man was himself. Burns spoke to all Scotsmen because he was one with all of them. A question that constantly came to his mind was what was human personality, and how came it about that there was that unique personality which they, along with their kindred clubs, sought to honour. Here was a man upon whose soul there was something of the spirit of a magnet, only the magnet drew not from others to him so much as the magnet drew him to others, and took from their personality something that enriched, something that empowered him to be what he came to -oe, even in his very short life, for Scotland and for the world. Burns had c: magnetism that was shared by all those with whom he care in contact. He expressed it himself in those words that must be familiar to many of those present, by the immortal song that was written to the charming, Lovely Davies. This was what he wrote when he sent the song to Miss Davies:— "When I met with a person 'after my own heart', I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration. I can no more resist rhyming on the impulse than an Aeolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air.

That was the magnetism in him that was drawn to other people. And so we had that cherished collection of songs that delighted our hearts. It was singing that made the heart grow cheery, and the world was needing singing such as Burns would have us

sing, that we might go forward into the unknown future with good heart and good cheer. As he read through the story of Burns and what he had written and what he had uttered, he sometimes wondered whether those great eyes of his looked through the iron curtain and pierced some of the great secrets of life. He wondered if perhaps and perchance there was not coursing in his blood — as indeed there must have been, for there was in every son of Scotland at the time — a sense that something should be done for Scotland because of the wrongs that had not been put right through the Union of the Parliaments. Perhaps Burns's father was not implicated in the revolution; perhaps some of his associates were, but the pen was ever mightier than the sword, and no matter what side men found themselves in that age, seeking to redress the wrongs of Scotland, Burns won a victory for Scotland, showing indeed that the pen was mightier than the sword, when wielded by such a heroic spirit as Robbie Burns. That a conversationalist Burns was. He was glad to think that the Burns Federation were seeking to encourage the young people of our day and generation to express themselves in good language. That was what Burns was able to do. There indeed they had the undying spirit of Burns, the spirit of education that was passed on to him by his father, and that he passed on to his children, to express themselves in language that could be understood by all who listened. And that had a tremendous charm even for a man like the Lord President of the Council, even although he had to use a glossary to find out the meaning of some of the words. The language was not Parliamentary language, but it was unequivocal — which was more than could be said of the language of some Members of Parliament to—day. Beyond all that, Burns had pierced through to a secret. It came out again and again in his life. He wished he could convey all there was in it, but perhaps even he had not been able to understand all that the secret contained. It had something to do with the Kirk at Alloway, where his father was buried. Why was it that "Tam o' Shanter" ran so wonderfully, so eerily, so full of the spirit of something that they could not quite just grasp, and yet they knew it was there all the time. It was in that poem, "Where is thy place of blissful rest." There, too, was the secret Burns had, to reveal as far as it was possible to human kind to reveal, a secret that mankind could not completely understand. It was there and we got it as they listened to that wonderful melody. And so he wanted to put it to them in one brief word, Burns, somehow or other, because he felt life pulsating through him, had a sense of the Creator of all life, and he honoured that Creator in every creature. That was the secret. When he addressed Edina, he addressed something that was a living soul and not merely a mass of prefab houses. Then when he described that great election in Dunfries—shire, each town in it had a carlin spirit, because a town was what its people were. And so all through life Burns caught at the tremendous truth that life is one and indivisible, and sod is the Creator of all life and the source off all life, and on that basis he could pray for the brotherhood of man, knowing that that was a secret of life from the very beginning of time, and that he had caught some glimpse at least of the meaning of it, and wished to pass it on to others. Burns was our National Bard, one who had indeed enriched Scotland by what he had done for our song, because of what he was as a great poet. It was of Scotland and of Scotia all the time that he sang and wrote and because he did so, men in every clime and men of every race could understand. They honoured Burns for the great poet he was. He put Scotland on the map by what he did, because in gave a literary turn to our Scottish language with all its varied dialects. Burns was sublimely a philosopher, one of the great minds of every age. He had penetrated further than most men into the secret of life itself. He was honoured and sung not only by those

who gathered in these haunts where he loved to gather, not only where men foregathered on the 25th of January, but by all men, who, like himself, knew that there was a secret of life that could be fathomed, and, with that secret so fathomed, life would be infinitely better for all.

The toast was honoured in silence, and thereafter the piper played a lament.