

Members and friends of the Dumfries Burns Howf Club listened in the -Globe Inn on Thursday night to a sparkling "Immortal Memory" from ex-Provost Dykes of Annan. The ex Provost said that television and radio angered him when he was subjected to singers - "Gifted with a nervous agility and suffer from fits of chronic Si. Vitus dance" - who were earning more in one week for singing rubbish, than Burns earned probably in his whole life, for writing lyrics and poems which would never be forgotten. We in Dumfries were very fortunate to be brought up in this neighbourhood, because we had the opportunity to traverse the highways and byeways frequented by the Immortal Bard. Earlier in the day, said the ex-Provost, he had had the honour of laying a wreath on the poet's grave - something that Her Majesty the Queen had also done. He wondered how many of Burns's contemporaries in Edinburgh could have prophesied what would happen to his memory one day - that it would be acclaimed and honoured by the Queen of a great Commonwealth. All over the world his works were known and yet Burns had never had the opportunities that we enjoyed to-day. During the time that Burns was at Ellisland and in financial difficulty, he received an offer to go to Jamaica and work at a sugar plantation as an overseer. It was a letter from a blind minister in Annan who advised him to go to Edinburgh.

#### EX-PROVOST DYKES IMMORTAL MEMORY (1962)

Burns did not go to Jamaica as an overseer - and overseer was just a polite name for slave-driver. A man who was the apostle of liberty could never have lived as a slave-driver among such unfortunates. It might seem incredible, but there were slaves in Scotland during the early life of Burns, and that was an. historical fact. There were many allusions to slaves and slavery throughout his works. For example, in his "A Man's a Man for a' That," Burns wrote :- "The coward slave we pass him by, We dare be poor for a' that."; and also "The Slave's Lament," and many others. Burns himself must have seen the plight of such unfortunate victims of man's inhumanity to man. It was proved by the fact that in 1772, a slave named Jackie was owned by Mr. Charles Warner Dunbar, of Machermore, near Newton Stewart, and was given his freedom in June of that year by a document compiled and witnessed in the Sheriff Courthouse at Wigtown, and attested by Thomas Dundas, Esq., Advocate, and Sheriff Depute of the county. Burns must have seen such men, and had written about them.

If ever a man deserved the adulation and approbation of the millions of people in whom he had given pleasure, not only in his own time, but in time to come, it was Robert Burns. He concluded:- "I know you will revere his memory in years to come."