

DR L. S. STIRLING — MORTAL MEMORY. (1968).

"Would the world of to—day have inspired Robert Burns to write such powerful verse and song?" This question was put by Dr George S. Stirling, a well—known psychiatrist of Crichton Royal, who as a Past President of the Howff Club, proposed "The Immortal Memory" at the Club's Anniversary Dinner in the Globe Inn on Thursday night.

He went on to suggest that we could certainly do with such a genius of expression to—day to rally us and to show us our real needs, and the important requirements for ourselves and for our country.

Dr Stirling commented at the outset of his address how, in pursuing his task of bringing yet another stone to Burns' cairn that night, his emotions had ranged from admiration to sorrow, from wonderment to pity, from doubts to certainty, because the sheer vitality of Burns grew with the careful study and enjoyment of his songs, his verse and, what is often less referred to, — his letters.

The doctor felt that although the world had changed significantly since the poet's time, such change was external and fairly superficial. Human beings and human experiences had not changed all that much, which explained Burns's ageless quality and made his works just as meaningful to—day.

Referring to the poet's genius, Dr Stirling felt one could not sum up men of such remarkable caliber with a single faculty or dissect their work under simple headings.

He went on to discuss Burns and his works which are closely en-twined and fascinating autobiographies, giving us so much insight into his nature, and undoubtedly increasing our interest in his poetry and song.

He felt that Shakespeare's quotation "they say the best men are moulded out of faults and for the most part become much more the better for being a little bad," was relevant to Robert Burns.

In the major part of his address, Dr Stirling illustrated by apt quotation, the scope of Burns's artistry and his unique ability to express so humorously, so descriptively, so tenderly, so imaginatively, such a tremendous range of human emotion, notably in individual poems but what was the hallmark of real talent, often in the same poem.

Touching on the subject of protests against hypocrisy and cant, which a section of young people express to—day, the speaker felt that the cry, "make love not war," might have appealed directly to Burns were he alive to—day, although the poet would have, no doubt, strongly condemned other aspects of contemporary youth.

Dr Stirling concluded his stimulating, fluent and knowledgeable address with the remarks that with all his human failings, Robert Burns was a man of supreme gifts and poetic genius, and how dull the world would be to—day if it only contained men of good sense and not genius; and what a dull lot we Scots would be without-our Bard and his legacy of poems and songs. We should be proud that he was a Scotsman, national yet international, and rejoice in celebrating his memory which would only fade when the love of beauty and melody dies out in our hearts.