

CHIEF CONSTABLE ALEX CAMPBELL IMMORTAL MEMORY (1977)

Hr. Campbell opened his toast speech with a precis of the poet's life. He went on to ask why men and women the world over should gather to honour the name of Robert Burns. It was not for love of poetry, nor love of the liquid refreshment consumed at these functions. It is for love of the man himself. It is astonishing that in an age which contained ugliness and positive hardship for working people, that so much love of beauty should emerge through the eyes of this one man.

Burns himself looked on life as the most harsh of masters, who gave few favours and each and everyone that was given had to be repaid -more than adequately repaid. It is often said that only those who have plunged into the very depths and really reach the heights. Find any man or woman who has never suffered from depression or experienced elation and you find someone who will not appreciate the works of our Bard.

Burns without love was like Hamlet without the Prince. As attitude towards women was the side of his character which has earned him the greatest publicity and notoriety.

Burns was a rake! Of this there is no doubt.

The speaker went on to defend the poet, pointing out that in history many great men raked as much as Burns, and more. Instances of these are Lord Nelson, Napoleon, and even Scotland's own James Forth.

Had Burns merely-used his women and passed on, they would have been forgotten. But he did not. He immortalised them in verse and song. It was because of that that this stigma has been attached to the bard.

Mr. Campbell concluded by saying that Burns was a penniless millionaire. He died a poor man, but left to posterity a veritable wealth of song and story.