

JOHN GRIERSON -- IMMORTAL MEMORY 1905

The toast of "The Immortal Memory" was felicitously voiced by the Chairman, Mr. Grierson. The gatherings that night in every town and village the whole world over were not, he said, sectional or party gatherings, but national. They breathed the spirit of an entire people; for Robert Burns was the most intensely national poet that ever lived. Supreme Giver of all Good gave Scotland a rich and rare gift in the immortal genius, which, when it rode to the high purpose for which it was given, men felt as they felt still and must always do so as long as human hearts could feel the power of genius, that this gift was truly the touch of nature that made the whole world kin. It was simple justice to our national poet to say that his brilliant genius should be looked at apart from the dark cloud through which it often shone: and struggled into glorious light. The toiling thousands of this and other lands had reason to be proud of that genius which had beautified the rough bye-ways of labour. They had ever looked upon his genius with grateful admiration. They stood true to him when he was cast off by those from whom better things might have been expected. No man knew better or could advocate better the home influence of humble cottage life. He knew the stress, the privations, the joys and the sorrows; the independence and the worth, the manly virtues; as well as the weaknesses; that were to be found in the cottage homes of Scotland, and nowhere did his marvellous genius appear to greater advantage, nowhere did it shine with greater brightness and purity, than when he started into life those songs and feelings which appealed to the common heart of mankind. His genius had wreathed round the brow of auld Scotland a garland of poetic beauty imperishable as her own heathery glens. In conclusion, Mr Grierson made reference to some of the poet's more famous songs, in admiring the exquisite lines of which, he remarked, the whole world had joined.