

Mr T Draffan Immortal Memory (1912 )

'The President, Mr. T. Draffan, in proposing "The Immortal Memory," said:- It is one of the greatest glories of our town that in it the most considerable British man of the 18th century, spent the latest and most fruitful years of his life Here we may well say:-

"Fairer seems our ancient burgh,

Ana the landscape seems more fair;

That he once had trod our pavements,

That he once had breathed our air."

The home of Burns, although of the poorer class, was respectable and cheerful, and his parents endeared themselves to their children, and permanently influenced their characters towards honesty, uprightness, and self respect. With such blood in his veins, with such memories in his young heart, with such noble and sacred influences on his soul, he set out on life with the desire to fulfil to some degree his duty to his fellowmen. How successful he was is known to us all. His denunciation of evil, his applauding the good, and in the "Cottar's Saturday Night" setting a picture which shows the family in religious worship, a thing now very seldom undertaken by the head of the family. The setting is perfect, every detail is fitted in, and there is no doubt that it represented his own home, when he as a young lad had to listen to those passages that later in life brought out the best of the man. Burns' early days were full of disappointments, and perhaps for us today we have benefited by his misfortunes.

His trip to Edinburgh, although opening up to him a means of forming acquaintances which might have benefited him, seems to have had the reverse effect, as, seeing such grandeur and refinement, his own self so poor, he felt dissatisfied with his position, not that he ever wished to become some lordly master, but that he felt he was patronized by those whose superior he was, in intellect. It was the sensitiveness that made him, at times, so fond of genial company, that ran him on to the side line of life. As a politician, his tactics were sound, and politicians of today are simply acting on his ideas in 'suppressing tyranny and alleviating the suffering of the poorer class of society, in showing that talent is above wealth in ruling and independent of social claims. His family life, although spent in ordinary circumstances with a faithful wife, might have been very different had Highland Mary lived to guide him through the path or life's journey, but such had not to be. That faithful woman Jean Armour must have had a sore heart, when, that night at Ellesland, she found her husband lying at the foot of a hay stack, gazing upwards at the bright stars shining in the heavens above, lost in thought and almost chilled to death, living in fancy again with his first love, Highland Mary. His words describing his thoughts "To Mary in Heaven," do not need repeating here, but I would ask you where you can get anything to touch them.

referring to Burns' work as an exciseman, Mr. Draffan said this was one of the most unfortunate jobs he could have engaged in, his duty taking him aim very often into perhaps over-free companionship, where his presence was always received with honour, for as a conversationalist he had no equal.

Unfortunately, the late night and the want of care of himself, brought about the end of this bright star of Scotland, such a personality as only Scotland can boast of - in originality second to none, in the fervent expression of deep feeling and in the keen perception of the beauties of nature, equal to any whoever revelled in the bright fairyland of poetry. Oh, that he could have seen the futurity of fame he created for him, If!!

It might have alleviated the dreary days of his sojourn at Mossgiel, and lightened the days of his pilgrimage on earth.