

## REV JAMES KEILLER IMMORTAL MEMORY (1964)

"I would lie to see a resuranc of the old Scotland, the true Scotland, standing on its own feet, and playing its distinctive part in the Concert of Europe and the world, outwith the shackles of a union which has outlived its time."

Rev. James Keillor, minister of Mouswald and Torthorwald said this when proposing "The Immortal Memory" at Dumfries Burns Howff Club's 76th anniversary dinner in the Globe Inn, on Friday evening.

To be born a Scot gave a man certain priveleges, Keillor told his listeners.

A Scot was the son of an ancient people whose fathers valued independence above all else; independence hardly won and jealously guarded by a man's own hard work and self—sacrifice.

Scotland had never in all its long story known such luxury, but it had known the glory of a freedom highly prized and a true appreciation of the things that stood at the end of the day.

Her people, like \_many another, had known suffering, yet always the spirit was triumphant. So Burns just had to be her national poet: He was made within his mind and soul of his country's travail — and he interpreted for his country (and thus for all good men) the inner meaning of that agony, the triumph that was never long absent. He gave to a people, dour on the surface, maybe, but romantic and spiritual within, words which were for them the wings of the morning. Indeed, his prayer was that his country might be spared the contagion of luxury and granted the continuance of a simple, but never narrow, piety and love. This was evident in his 'Cotter's Saturday Night.'

The quality of Burns was the result of his inner triumph through suffering and the fact that he was, in this, at one with his country.

Yet there was more to the man than that. Within him had beaten a heart tender and true, angry only in the presence of injustice or canting hypocrisy. Nothing in the world was finer than 'Mary Morrison' and 'Sweet Afton', and nothing more searing than 'Holy Willie's Prayer.'

It may seem odd to many that a minister of the Kirk should be exto1151g Robert Burns who, in his day, had little liking for the Establishment. Odd, indeed but only at first sight, and only for those who know Burns at surface level. certainly, for the practices of many orthodox believers of his day and for much of the ongoings of the Kirk of his day, Robert Burns had nothing but scorn. Nevertheless, nowhere in his works is there anything but awe and reverence' before the Almighty and a high love for the things of good report. His life was far from exemplary, as people are quick TO remind us, but none of us can ever know how bitterly the poet repented of his weaknesses. And this must be said.: he remained to the end of his days a member of the Kirk, and even put himself under the discipline of the Kirk.

The Kirk might have its faults, but it was the agent of one to whom the heart of Burns responded in reverent love, and so the Bard remained within its walls and, certainly, this Herd would not blame him if at times he found the louse more interesting than the man in the pulpit: