

## Mr FRED BELFORD IMMORTAL MEMORY (1967)

No man living or dead ever had Burns's godlike gift of holding the common heart of humanity. And that was by men like Shakespeare, Milton, Wellington and Churchill did not have the reverence throughout the world that our poet had.

Toasting "The Immortal Memory" at the Anniversary Dinner in Burns Howff Club, Dumfries, Mr. Fred. J. Belford, a past president of the Burns Federation, asked the crowded room why it was that the poet was so revered in places as far apart as Canada, Russia, America and China.

- "Has not everything been said that can be said about Burns?" asked Mr. Belford. "Over 3,000 editions of his works have been published and everything he wrote is worth its weight in gold."

Translations of the poet's works were all over the world, had crossed all its frontiers and were giving its peoples a great love of Burns. as philosophy was greatly established even in places behind the Iron Curtain.

In the timber camps of Canada, the sheep stations of Australia, and even on aeroplanes going over to America that very night, people were toasting the poet. Mr Belford went on to trace the early days of Burns — the poverty and hardship that he faced when young. Then he described Burns' love of reading, a love which made him peer into dry books of small print. This gave Burns his magnificent powers of conversation.

Mr. Belford added:— "If you pick up Burns' poems you always find at least one emotion that you have felt."

There was, however, a great amount of humour in his poems. Mr. Belford said:— "Burns was a Scotsman, and every second Scotsman is a born humorist. Mr Belford spoke of the beautiful words of Burns' 380 songs, all of which told of passionate and tender love. No other nation had anything to compare with them. "However," added Mr. Belford, "those who knew Burns personally said that the writing was nothing to the man. Burns' eyes would flash with scorn and indignation when he came across cruelty or injustice.

Everything of Scotland haunted Burns — the thistle, her emblem, and the men of her history, Wallace and Bruce. He put the rivers of the west of Scotland on the map with songs like "Sweet Afton" and "Bonnie Doon." He had a tremendous love for his country.

It was Burns we had to thank for the preservation of the Scottish vernacular

Had he not come along when he did, the beautiful Doric Scottish tongue would have been lost. The English were sweeping into the country from the South, so Burns deliberate.

put his words into his native tongue, to preserve them for posterity.

Mr Belford said :- "Words like 'scunner and 'stour in your een' have no equal in the English language.

Burns had an intense sympathy and compassion for all things, Everything from the heart downwards was embraced by his great all-pervading sympathy.

Man was his great subject. He could take anybody, a duke or a navy, on the strength of his manhood. His own words were the best — 'Man to man the world o'er, shall brothers be for a' that.'