

Dr J A CAMERON IMMORTAL MEMMORY (1970).

Allegations that Robert Burns was an alcoholic can be dismissed "out of hand," claimed Dr J. A. Cameron, physician superintendent of Lochmaben Hospital, when he proposed "The Immortal Memory" at Dumfries Burns Howff Club annual dinner in the Globe inn on Monday. In fact, added Dr Cameron, it was probably true that the poet drank significantly less than was the norm in his day.

Earlier, Dr Cameron said that a feature of Burns's genius lay in his treatment of the commonplace — his capacity to deal with everyday things in a language understood by ordinary people. Nowhere did this commonplace approach "show through" more than in his reference to love; it was the simplicity of his writing that captivated. Great poets like Shakespeare and Milton wrote their poetry for the educated, whereas Burns wrote his for everybody.

Referring to the poet's "fundamental honesty," Dr Cameron said this quality sometimes went so, far as to be indiscreet.

Burns was constantly intermingling the respectable with the not so respectable. This honesty — this open humanity — was one of the factors, perhaps the most important one, that endeared Burns to people in every country in the world. "A Man's a Man for a' That" would, in itself, have ensured his immortality.

One of the great strengths of the Burns tradition was this rallying point of nationality and his universal appeal. It had been suggested that, if the poet were living to—day, he would have been a Scottish Nationalist. I take leave to disagree with that statement. Commenting that "The Immortal Memory" was in Burns' songs and poems, Dr Cameron said they would be honouring the bard most by singing these songs and reading these poems.