

On the 1st day of July, 1937, Willie Jackson died. At his funeral many old Orpheons were present. John Seaton Smith, in the unavoidable absence of the Conductor, read this tribute for him.

WILLIE JACKSON

Willie Jackson was one of the founders of the Choir. He was my oldest musical friend. Together we studied singing. Together we worked—he as a member of the Toynbee Musical Association, I as the conductor; and when, out of that association there emerged the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, Willie Jackson was one of its first members, and one of its best members. Year after year, he gave valiant and distinguished service, throwing himself into the work with a wholeheartedness which was an example and an inspiration to all his colleagues. No one ever stood in higher respect than he: so much so that, were I, to-day, asked to name one person in whom the qualities which we have come to regard as the *spirit of the Choir* were most completely exemplified, that person would be Willie Jackson. True as steel, generous, kindly, gracious—that was Willie! Music spake to him, and through him, not as notes but as spirit. Tenderness he knew, majesty, mirth. There was no shade or nuance he did not react to: no call too big to find him wanting. He had richness in his giving because he had richness in himself.

Song was his escape from the commonplaces of life, and he sang as a bird sings, selflessly, ecstatically, for the joy of it. He was the perfect gentleman, the perfect friend. Never from his lips came an unkind or an unjust word: never did one have reason to doubt his fidelity, his integrity. Even when his *Orpheus* days were over as a singer, his love for the old Choir was unimpaired, his pride in it undiminished.

No words of ours could ever estimate the measure or the quality of the love he gave us. There was a sweet fragrance in his friendship, and a great liberality. It was extended to old and new alike: so much so that members of the Choir to-day, who hardly knew him, know that his is one of the really great names in our story.

And now the hand of death takes him from us. He shall know us no more, but we shall know him as long as life holds, and our songs shall know him and shall sing his praise. Into the web of our being has he been woven. How well he would have understood that simile: for Willie in his youth sat at a handloom (in Stonehouse) weaving cloth. Warp and woof were common terms to him. Little did he dream in those early days that this *Orpheus* fabric of ours would be so richly patterned over with the golden threads of his affection. But it is so.

We are proud to have known him, proud that he was our friend. The way he has gone is the way we shall all go. May it be possible to say of us as truly as can be said of him—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Shortly before he died, we saw him for the last time. Lying in bed, he sang, faintly but clearly. His song was—"Joy of my heart, Isle of Moola." And he left a request that his ashes should be scattered on that same island. There, at Ulva, this was done. And there, looking to the west, is a wayfarer's seat, a tribute from the Choir to his memory.