

**SMITH WORKS THE ORACLE.**

The members of the Mechanics' Society visited the gasworks the other day, and were apparently mightily pleased with the management. They did not know that the clearness of the fires and the absence of "choke" were due to the fact that the retorts had been charged, as we are informed, four hours before the visitors appeared on the scene. Probably, also, they do not know that it is unusual for "charges" to remain in the retorts more than three hours. The fires might well clear themselves in four hours.

Have any of the Labour men in the Council the "game" to visit the gas-work, accompanied by a practical man, without giving the manager notice? We know a stalwart ex-"gasser" who is not afraid that Mr. Smith will double *him* up! Now, then, Bisset!

**ABERDEEN TRADES COUNCIL.**

At the fortnightly meeting of the Aberdeen Trades Council, held on Wednesday, Mr. Johnstone, the secretary, submitted the annual report.

At the commencement he stated that the year had been one of great progress for the labour movement, and although the report was necessarily a very condensed one, his references to various incidents in which the Council has been more or less intimately concerned were conclusive proofs of this.

He referred to the Scotch Railway strike as being a valuable lesson to the workers, although in itself a failure. It had taught us that the easiest way to reduce the hours of labour is the best way, and that the old-fashioned method of resorting to strikes in order to secure this result must be laid aside for the more effective method of legislative limitation of the working day.

In view of the approach of a general election the Council has determined that something should be done in order to express the needs of labour and give definite shape to the principles guiding the formation of a party independent of the existing political organizations.

During the past year they had taken the leading part in the organization of a Scottish Conference of Trades Unionists and other advanced bodies. The success of this meeting exceeded their most sanguine anticipation.

The conference, which met in Edinburgh, was attended by 67 delegates,

who represented about 90,000 workers, and it was generally conceded to be one of the most significant events of the time.

The speeches delivered on that occasion were of such an advanced nature that they drew attention from all parts of the country. The intelligence and determination of the delegates gave an impetus to the formation of a new Labor party which carried surprise into the camps of both the old parties.

It was there formally declared that the Trades Unionists of Scotland are no longer attached either to Liberal or Conservative, but are now resolved to make the interests of Labour the paramount consideration, and the new Labour party constituted to carry them out the strongest force in politics.

The Council has also during the past year been able to wring concessions from various public boards in regard to public contracts and the Trade Union rate of wages, and they have secured the return of Labour representatives to the School Board and the Town Council.

There is, says Mr. Johnstone, a shadow of depression creeping over this country, and we have now a number of unemployed who are not only suffering themselves, but who are a menace to those in employment. But past experience has taught us that we may deal with this difficulty by abolishing piece-work, the practice of working overtime, and by lessening the hours of labour in proportion to application of machinery.

We readily admit that the record of the past year is a very original one, and we take occasion to remark that we do not know of any time in which there has been so much evidence of good work from the Council.

Under the auspices of the Council we have had some of the foremost representatives of labour in the city. Not to speak of the lady workers in the cause, we have had Tillet, Mann, and Champion. Altogether, the efforts of Trades Unionists, Socialists, and Land Nationalizers promise to be rewarded in the far North by a city of intelligent working men, upholding the best traditions of the Scottish democratic spirit.

**TRADES UNIONISM AND CO-OPERATION.**

A meeting was held the other night at the Poplar Music Hall to advocate a closer union between trade unionists and co-operators.

Ben Tillet moved—"That this meeting of co-operators and trades unionists thinks it desirable that pro-

ducers should take means of readily ascertaining that the goods they buy have been made under fair conditions, and to further this object, proposes that all such goods should be marked with a trade union label." He said that the system of co-operation had been tried and found successful. The wives of trades unionists had been taunted with going to the cheapest shops to spend their money; this was partly true, and it would therefore be necessary to undergo some amount of self-sacrifice on the part of the wives until the principles of co-operation had been firmly established. But when once this was accomplished they would begin a vigorous onslaught upon the citadels of greed, capitalism, and monopoly, and the producer would begin to acquire direct control over the wealth he had produced. (Cheers.) Miss May Abraham, in seconding the resolution, said the benefit of fair wages and fair conditions were known to all, but these could only be accomplished by getting the means of production into their own hands. No improvement could be brought about by outsiders. That must come from the inside. (Cheers.)

The resolution was carried.

Tom McCarthy moved:—"That this meeting thinks it desirable that all trade unionists should become co-operators, and that all co-operators should become trade unionists; and further urge all women to join the Womens' Co-operative Guild."

This was seconded, and carried unanimously.

**ONLY A WORKER!**

Unpleasant to look at, toil-stained and worn,

With ill-fitting clothes and heavily shod,

Unshaven, unwashed, his hair closely shorn—

Only a worker with shovel and hod.

What does he live for, you wonder and think:

Is he a being possessing a soul

Rising above sordid labour and drink—

Is he a man, in part, or in whole?

Watch the same man as in workshop he stands,

Listening to words that bid him to say—

Will he strike work till the workers' demands

Are settled and signed or they turned away?

Silent a moment, he thinks he can see

A cosy home broken, a wife looking ill,

Children half starving and dying, maybe—

He thinks of all this, yet answers "I will!"

Watch him once more, weary days have sped—

Hungry and gaunt with looks of despair;

As crouching beside a dark, noisome bed

He fondles a corpse that lies hidden there

For weeks he has fought most nobly and brave—

Fought for his homestead, his children his wife;

But all for no good, a pauper's cold grave

Will soon cover her he loved more than life.

Heart-broken, homeless, at last he is told

The struggle is o'er, the workers have won;

He goes back to work—sad, listless, and cold,

To dream of the things that struggle has done.

Only a worker, unknown e'en by name—

Only a worker, dulled by dull care;

Unwritten, untold his victory, his fame—

His laurels are laurels of death and despair.

FRED E. MANNING.