

## *An Imperial Banquet*

however, in spite of the snub he had received, could not refrain from talking.

'Well, I don't go in for politics much, either, but if what's in this 'ere paper is true, it seems to me as we oughter take some interest in it, when the country is being ruined by foreigners.'

'If you're goin' to believe all that's in that bloody rag you'll want some salt,' said Harlow.

The 'Obscurer' was a Tory paper and Harlow was a member of the local Liberal club.

Harlow's remark roused Crass.

'Wots the use of talkin' like that?' he said. 'You know very well that the country is being ruined by foreigners. Just go to a shop to buy something; look round the place an' you'll see that more than 'arf the dam stuff comes from abroad. They're able to sell their goods 'ere because they don't 'ave to pay no dooty, but they takes care to put 'eavy dooties on our goods to keep 'em out of their countries; and I say it's about time it was stopped.'

'Ear, 'ear!' said Linden, who always agreed with Crass, because the latter, being in charge of the job, had it in his power to put in a good—or bad—word for a man to the boss.

'Ear, 'ear! Now that's wot I call common sense.'

Several other men, for the same reason as Linden, echoed Crass's sentiments, but Owen laughed contemptuously.

'Yes, it's quite true that we gets a lot of stuff from foreign countries,' said Harlow, 'but they buys more from us than we do from them.'

'Now you think you know a 'ell of a lot,' said Crass; 'ow much more did they buy from us last year than we did from them?'

Harlow looked foolish; as a matter of fact his knowledge of the subject was not much wider than Crass's. He mumbled something about having no 'ed for figures, and offered to bring full particulars next day.

'You're wot I call a bloody windbag,' continued Crass; 'you've got a 'ell of a lot to say, but wen it comes to the point you don't know nothin'.'

'Why even 'ere in Mugsborough,' chimed in Sawkins—who though still lying on the dresser had been awakened by the shouting—'we're overrun with 'em! Nearly all the waiters and the cook at the Grand Hotel, where we was working last month, is foreigners.'