

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists

'Yes,' said old Joe Philpot, tragically, 'and then there's all them Hitalian horgan grinders, an' the blokes wot sells chest-nuts; an' wen I wos goin' 'ome last nlight I see a lot of them Frenchies sellin' hunions, an' a little wile afterwards I met two more of 'em comln' up the street with a bear.'

Notwithstanding the disquieting nature of this intelligence, Owen again laughed, much to the indignation of the others, who thought it was a very serious state of affairs and said it was a dam shame that these people were allowed to take the bread out of English people's mouths: they ought to be driven into the bloody sea.

And so the talk continued, principally carried on by Crass and those who agreed with him. None of them really understood the subject; not one of them had ever devoted fifteen consecutive minutes to the earnest investigation of it. The papers they read were filled with vague and alarming accounts of the quantities of foreign merchandise imported into this country, the enormous number of aliens constantly arriving, their destitute condition, how they lived, the crimes they committed, and the injury they did to British trade. These were the seeds which, cunningly sown in their minds, caused a bitter indiscriminating hatred of foreigners to grow up within them. To them the mysterious thing which they called either the 'Friscal Policy,' the 'Fistical Policy,' or the 'Fissical Question,' was a great Anti-Foreign Crusade. The country was in a hell of a state; poverty, hunger, and misery in a hundred forms had already invaded thousands of homes and stood upon the threshold of thousands more. How came these things to be? It was the bloody foreigner! Therefore, down with the foreigners and all their works. Out with them. Drive them into the bloody sea! The country would be ruined if not protected in some way. This Friscal, Fistical, Fissical or whatever the hell policy it was called, *was* Protection, therefore no one but a bloody fool could hesitate to support it. It was all quite plain—quite simple. One did not need to think twice about it. It was scarcely necessary to think... out it at all.

This was the conclusion reached by Crass and such of his mates who thought they were Conservatives—the majority of them could not have read a dozen sentences aloud without stumbling—it was not necessary to think or study or investigate anything. It was all as clear as daylight. The foreigner was the enemy, and the cause of poverty and bad trade.