

rough and tumble you will probably come off worse than ever. The Englishman in the fog does not want the ignorant and interested guides who beset him to be out-bawled or lashed with gibes; he wants to be told in a quiet and firm voice from time to time where he is.

We have no doubt that Lord Salisbury intended his late speech at the Guildhall for such a reassuring utterance; we are sure that he imagined it sufficient, we fear that he thought it all that the country was entitled to. That it was sufficient is an error which a perusal of the comments of the Press would expose; our present purpose is to deny strenuously that such vague and rare encouragement is all that we have a right to expect. To be quite plain, if the nation insists on having full information on certain matters, an English Government has no choice but to give that information or disappear. The second alternative is more remote than usual in the present case, perhaps more remote than it has ever been, but that fact does not affect the principle, and if openly used as a staff to lean upon would soon break in the hand of any Government, however strong numerically. The line taken by those who are sometimes spoken of as "our rulers" is a different one: they appeal, and with complete success, to the common sense of their principals; "We cannot tell you everything, or your own interests would suffer." This is very often true; it is no doubt more often and more vitally true than thoughtless people realise; but every piece of evidence and every reasonable presumption goes strongly to show that the present Government has during the Boer war used this plea to abuse our forbearance out of measure. We impute to them no discreditable motive; their patriotism is beyond question, and they are right in supposing that if they disappeared before the war is ended the last state of this nation would be worse than the first. But in determining to keep us in the dark for our own good to the extent they have done for months past, they have exceeded the limit both of what is legitimate and of what is necessary or expedient.