

strength of the Liberal party. We must not forget that the party which has gained so complete a victory was not that of a popular Government in an undamaged position. In England every Government is the weaker for five years of office, unless it has during that time conducted the affairs of the nation in such a manner as to retard, if not to repair, the waste of natural decay. We see no reason to believe that the present Government had, up to a year ago, been more successful or more fortunate in this respect than any of their predecessors. Their domestic policy may have been popular from time to time with sections of their own party; it may even have been wise and just in itself; but there can be no question that it was not viewed with enthusiasm by the country at large. In foreign affairs their campaigning had been on steep and thorny ground, and to the eye of the mere onlooker—very probably an uninformed, shortsighted, and hasty observer, but none the less for practical purposes the sole umpire—their manoeuvres had appeared ill-conceived and vacillating. To what an extent this was the case is shown by the public feeling on the Fashoda affair; that crisis ended as well as was perhaps possible under the circumstances, but its conclusion was greeted with relief rather than with acclamation. The episode of Port Arthur caused an outburst of positive irritation and left behind much discontent. We are not saying that these feelings were justified: it is more than possible that Lord Salisbury's services to his country may in the broader light of the future present a very different appearance, but we do not think that his foreign policy from 1895 to 1899 can be said to have been a source of strength to his party. But when we come to September 1900 all is changed, and changed unquestionably by the course of events in South Africa. The paradox, to put it briefly, as it has been stated by many Liberals, is this: one of the most direct and most important consequences of an undesirable and ill-conducted war is to give an unpopular Government all the advantages of a fresh and enthusiastic popularity