Sir,—Before offering any general remarks on the above scheme, it is necessary to state very broadly and distinctly the point of view from which one approaches the consideration of such subject. However much many of us may not only admire, but sympathise with, the arduous labours of able philosophical minds, we must be careful not to confound the views and opinions put forward by men of such calibre and nobility with what are really the practical aspects of questions coming forward constantly for consideration and actual treatment in our own day and generation. Much in the scheme before me, therefore, I may broadly say, may be worthy of serious practical comment and consideration a generation hence; but it has no claim to be put forward within the scope of practical politics in our own time, and therefore must be regarded with suspicion and distrust if pushed by philosophical thinkers into the arena of public discussion. A thing out of date is like a six-months child; it has no chance of life, because the functions which should have brought it forth at maturity have not been properly fulfilled. I have always (at least, of late years, after much philosophic study) regarded practical and progressive politics—the Liberal politics of our day—as the ex-
pression of the growth of the nation, following out its own instincts and genius in gradual and natural development, and expressing such in law when ripe for such expression. The difference between the instincts of a people and the people themselves is only that the former are the greater minds of the people, and see and appreciate and know and ascertain sooner than the many what are the wants and requirements of each succeeding age. Those who are ahead of their age are the philosophers; those who are behind are the Tories.

Upon the general merits of this comprehensive scheme, therefore, from a philosophical point of view, I do not propose to enter. But its promoters must not think, as a consequence, that I have no sympathy with their prospective appreciation of what society may eventually come to. Still, on practical grounds, viewing in the light and reason of our own age and day, the scheme has one grave defect. It starts from an abstract and philosophical basis, and has no relation whatever to existing circumstances, laws, or conditions of society in Great Britain or elsewhere. My view is that we shall arrive at these higher grounds of civilization naturally in due time, without undertaking to get there by the aid of a balloon.

Neither has the scheme, therefore, as a necessary consequence from what I have just said, any relation to "the lines of the Constitution" which has governed England in a rough and ready manner for so many centuries. I have elsewhere shown in print that I believe this Constitution to be philosophically sound, whatever modifications or improvements or reforming alterations it may have in the process of time to undergo. It therefore follows that, from my own point of view, and as the result of my own studies, I cannot regard this scheme as sound in itself, apart from the fact that it is impracticable. I believe the working out of these problems is the old-fashioned English method of reform, however slow and clumsy and difficult such process may be. To be so slow and difficult only proves that it is the expression of actual life, plus as much of the intelligence of each age as can be worked into it.

Turning now to the more practical aspects of the politics of our day, it must be allowed to express a hope that our reformers will not coquette with this scheme of nationalisation. To do so would only be to retard healthy and sound reform for several years, and also give occasion for those rash and deprecatory addresses which the Tories furnish the country with when any speculative mode of reform is advanced. It would also be an unwise and unpatriotic step, as those that have at heart the welfare of the country would not entertain the scheme. Without discounting its details, therefore, I must be allowed to let it pass.

The views which are advocated by the Farmers' Alliance seem to me those which are most likely to commend themselves to the country. They are practical, and they follow the "lines of the Constitution." If I may be allowed to quote a commonplace historic incident, exactly as the barons of old forced their Sovereign to sign their liberties, so will the farmers of England shortly force Parliament to sign their enfranchisement from obsolete laws and rules and conditions of tenure of land. The growth of public opinion as to the necessity of agricultural reform; the movement among the farmers themselves for better and sound conditions of tenure; the wants of the community generally, in the way of an increased supply of food, and therefore, a corresponding increased supply of food, and therefore, a corresponding sympathetic and healthy and sound reform for several years, and also give occasion for those rash and deprecatory addresses which the Tories furnish the country with when any speculative mode of reform is advanced. It would also be an unwise and unpatriotic step, as those that have at heart the welfare of the country would not entertain the scheme. Without discounting its details, therefore, I must be allowed to let it pass.

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