

fourth, moulding. It is no use to season the agate; it is vain to try to polish slate; but both are fitted by the qualities they possess for the service in which they are honored."

It requires but very little reflection to show that one factor of the prosperity of a country must depend on the extent to which individual differences and individual talents, tastes and powers are developed and utilized. If all were made alike there would be but one excellence, and many would certainly be condemned to uncongenial occupations. As it is there are many excellences. Few there are who could not excel in something, and when each is able to secure that occupation in which he succeeds best, the state reaps the largest harvest from the energies of the people.

So much for theory. Evidently theory declares that there is danger in universality. What does experiment say? The *Rassegna Nazionale* recently—that is to say, a month ago—had a very remarkable account of the working of the Italian school system, written by Signor Ajroli, a man of position and authority. He tells us that no country revels so enthusiastically in pedagogy and in educational discussion of all kinds, and none is so inefficient in practice, as Italy. "Real education," he says, "is still at a very low level there, and, as a rule, elementary scholars read badly and write worse, while their brains are muddled with smatterings of science. The Government, in its craze for centralization, has attempted to enforce a single educational programme on the whole country, without any regard for local customs, needs or interests, while the educational experts insist upon time-tables, etc., being altered with bewildering rapidity, in accordance with the latest educational craze." "Certainly elementary education, 'free, compul-

sory, uniform and secular,' is not a success in Italy." And I may add it never has been a success anywhere. It may now be asserted, with little fear of contradiction, that wherever Procrustean methods have been tried they have failed to increase the prosperity of the country trying them, and therefore I cannot now say that what seemed to be a rock ahead ten years ago is still a real danger.

Nevertheless, as a principle of method in schools, the need for taking full account of individual idiosyncrasies, and of varying the general treatment as individual conditions demand, is well worth our consideration.

The main purposes of these monthly meetings, I take it, are two—encouragement and instruction. First, that we teachers may encourage each other by taking stock together of the results and difficulties, the plans and prospects of our work; and, secondly, that the experience which has fallen to the lot of a few may be made available for many. With this view I have accepted the secretary's invitation for to-night. Now we have made some progress in ten years towards a full recognition of the fact that individuality has a claim on our attention. What is the movement for technical education but a consequence of this?

The late Professor Huxley thus described the main objects of the movement:—

"A small percentage of the population is born with a most excellent quality, a desire of excellence, or with special aptitudes of some sort or another. . . . Now the most important object of all education schemes is to catch these exceptional people, and turn them to account for the good of society. No man can say where they will crop up; like their opposites, the fools and knaves, they appear sometimes in the palace and sometimes in