

■ The conscientious teacher is described in this article.

THE ESSENTIALS OF GOOD TEACHING

The famous Toscanini once arrived in a new city and took over an orchestra he had never conducted before. He started them on something easy, like *Semiramide*. After a minute or two he noticed that the first violin looked odd. He was playing well enough, but his face was all distorted, and when he turned a page to begin a new section, he really grimaced as though he was in great pain. Toscanini stopped the orchestra and said: "Concert-master! Are you ill?"

The first violin's face at once returned to normal. "No, thank you," he said, "I'm quite all right, maestro. Please go on."

"Very well, if you're sure you're fit. Begin at D, please, gentlemen." And off they went again. But the next time Toscanini glanced at the first violin, he saw him

looking worse than ever. His face was all drawn up to one side, his teeth were showing between wolfish lips, his brow was furrowed with deep clefts, he was sweating painfully and breathing hard.

"One moment, please. Concert-master, you really look ill. Do you want to go home?"

"No, no, no, Mr. Toscanini, please go ahead."

"But I insist," said Toscanini. "What's wrong, are you having an attack, would you like to lie down for a while?"

"No, I'm not ill," said the first violin.

"Well, what on earth is the matter?" said Toscanini. "You look awful, you have been making the most agonizing faces, you're obviously suffering. . ."

"To be quite frank," said the first violin, "I hate music."

Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But there are millions of people doing the same thing every day all over the world. They have a job they hate, they perform it grudgingly and inefficiently, they make it more difficult for themselves and for everybody associated with them. Sometimes it scarcely matters. If the girls in the music shop can't find the music, the customer can wait until Mr. MacWhirter comes in, or at worst he can order from the publishers. But it is terribly important when a teacher, whose job is to awaken young minds to a valuable subject, shows his pupils by every gesture, by every intonation of his voice (and remember, young people notice such things very quickly and sensitively), that he thinks the subject is not worth while learning; and that learning anything whatever is a waste of time.

The first essential of good teaching, then, is that the teacher must know the subject. That really means that he must continue to learn it.

The second essential is that he must like it. The two are connected, for it is almost impossible to go on learning anything year after year without feeling a spontaneous interest in it.

Think how astonished you would be if your doctor told you that personally he really cared nothing about the art of healing, that he never read the medical journals and paid no attention to new treatments for common complaints that apart from making a living he thought it completely unimportant whether his patients were sick or sound, and that his real interest was mountain-climbing. You would change your doctor. But the young cannot change their teachers — at least, not until they reach university age, sometimes not even then. They have sometimes to submit to being treated by doctors of the mind, who seem to believe the treatment useless and the patient worthless. No wonder they distrust education. — *By Gilbert Highet.*