

RELIGIOUS NEWS

Quiet Hard Practice Results In Geniuses

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Eleven years ago Roland Smith moved to Atlanta to occupy first chair French Horn with the Atlanta symphony. Three years later, because of a disagreement with the conductor, he laid aside his beautiful talent not to pick it up for six years.

Recently, following a reorganization of the symphony orchestra, Roland Smith once again occupied first chair French Horn and the music critics are acclaiming him a musical genius.

What they don't know is that for the last two years, before resuming his position in the orchestra, Roland has practiced between four and five hours a day, running scales and conditioning his lips to reclaim his talent.

It is obvious that no amount of practice or hard work will turn mediocrity into talent; but what is less obvious is that even the most flaming natural talent will curdle and wither unless it is continually watered and nourished with practice.

Several years ago, when Ben Hogan was at the top of the golf world in talent and prestige, I used to drive across town in Ft. Worth to watch him on the putting greens at the Colonial. For hours at a time the famous golfer would stand on the green — putting, putting,

putting. After winning every major tournament in the world, Bantam Ben was still practicing on fundamentals.

When Queen Victoria exclaimed to Paderewski after a concert, "Ah, you are a genius," he replied, "Perhaps your Majesty, but before I was a genius I was a drudge."

Sarasate said much the same thing when a famous critic called him a genius. "A genius," he sighed. "For 27 years I've practiced 14 hours a day and now they call me a genius."

One cannot hope to succeed in any of the arts unless one is willing to put up with the drudgery, day after day. Established actors, for instance, go back to acting school to learn more about the techniques. Eminent conductors study scores diligently, even after they seem to know them by heart. Professional bowlers and tennis players are constantly working daily on the basic fundamentals, foot work, grip, stride. Schnabel said he was always finding something new in a Beethoven sonata, something he had not seen or understood before.

What the public sees is the flashing virtuosity on the stage, and it imagines that this is the main job of the performer. But the main job is done in private — running scales, shadow boxing, practicing putts. By the time the conductor approaches the podium, or the dancer swirls across the stage, it is too late for success or failure. If the preparation has been inadequate, the performance cannot be good.