

IN PRAISE OF IGNORANCE

The ~~present~~ essay, 'In Praise of Ignorance' has been written by Hilaire Belloc. He is best known for his keen powers of observation and an eye for the picturesque in characters and scenes. His historical studies are brilliant pieces of writing. He is described as literary artist painting in details on a canvas where the main outlines are already drawn.

In Praise of Ignorance has a paradoxical title. The essayist is writing in praise of ignorance which seems to be absurd. Ignorance is a pejorative term with negative meaning, i.e. lack of knowledge. Every person has his limitation. He can't competently deal with any subject. Then let him compare it with the vast, the oceanic prospect of the things about which he knows nothing. Hilaire holds that it is a great thing to possess a true knowledge of one's own ignorance. In a sense, one should have knowledge of things in pairs.

The modern system of education has justly been criticized by the wisest and the best of mankind. But the lay man can't say in defence of the modern examination system. The author is puzzled by the baronial system of examination. He has written answers to several examination papers, and has negative attitude towards them. As an examinee the writer has been surrounded with dozens of other examinees eat at his little desk with an underpaid



insurmountable. He moralises over his sad experience at the examination hall. 'Every examinee becomes convinced of his ignorance of the vast, the oceanic prospect of the things about which he knows nothing. A knowledge of one's own experience ignorance is the beginning of learning. But these are some professional examinees who take examination unphilosophically, without speculation of their ignorance. The author calls them 'strong-hearted and sane.'

The author laments that all his writings mostly concentrate on preliminaries with a very little time left for the main problem. He concludes that chief spiritual attribute of ignorance is the power to flood the mind with happiness. It is vain to be an idealist in this ugly sordid world where it is folly to be wise and blissful to be ignorant. ~~the author~~

The author pompously concludes his mock-serio comic elegant title of an essay upon a note of grandeur. He declares with full authority - "It is by ignorance alone that we advance through the rough sea of this mortal life." Thus, this essay is an elegant essay on a trivial subject written in dignified style.