

escape from grief into joy. You can see these children almost as clearly and as tenderly as Lamb saw them. For days afterwards you will not be able to look upon a child without recalling Lamb's portrayal of the grace of childhood. He will have shared with you his perception of beauty. If you possess children he will have renewed for you the charm which custom does very decidedly stale.

And having read the essay, if you reflect upon it, you will see how its emotional power over you has sprung from the sincere and unexaggerated expression of actual emotions exactly remembered by someone who had an eye always open for beauty. The beauty of old houses and gardens and aged, virtuous characters, the beauty of children, the beauty of companionships, the softening beauty of dreams in an arm-chair—all these are brought together and mingled with the grief and regrets which were the origin of the mood. Why, then, is "Dream Children" a classic? It is a classic because it transmits to you distinguished emotions, because it makes you respond to the throb of life more intensely, more justly and more nobly. And it is capable of doing this because Charles Lamb had a very distinguished, a very sensitive and a very honest mind. He felt so keenly that he was obliged to find relief in imparting his emotions. And his mental processes were so sincere that he could neither exaggerate nor diminish the truth. If he had lacked any one of these three qualities, his appeal would have been narrowed and weakened, and he would not have become a classic. He forces you to understand, and because of this power his work is great and he is a classic.

I have dwelt upon this matter at some length because so few people in reading ever try to analyze why a certain kind of reading repels them and certain other kinds have a strange attraction. In other words, they read without making use of their reason-