

DREAM CHILDREN: A REVERIE

Dream children, a personal essay, is written by Charles Lamb, an essayist of the Romantic Age. This is a social criticism which begins on a casual note. The essayist recalls memories of his grandmother, Mrs. Field and her palatial mansion with a big garden.

The girl whom Charles Lamb loved was married to Beatrix. He remained unmarried to look after her unmarried ailing ~~and~~ sister, Mary Lamb. The personal frustration in love binds a highly emotive expression in this essay. In his dream, he is in the company of his two dream children — Charles and Alice who are portrayed realistically in their response to the essayist's account of his reminiscence. Mrs. Field was an affectionate lady in the big mansion. The garden was the playground for Lamb's children. They used to collect flowers and fruits from the garden.

The essayist creates an illusion of reality and an atmosphere of suspense, we fail to understand that we are reading the details of a dream till we come to the end of the essay when Charles Lamb reverts to his waking up from the state of trance or reverie. Finally the essayist tells that Charles and Alice were not children at all. The dream vision ends when the essayist wakes up and comes back to reality to find her faithful sister Bridget by his side. Like Keats in Ode to a Nightingale Charles Lamb

says — "Was it a dream  
Do I sleep or do I awake!"

Dream Children is a human document. It is an artistic fusion of humour and pathos, of smiles and tears. It presents an April blend of sunshine and tears. Humour arises when Charles and Alice — the dream children — respond appropriately to their dream father's recital of his reminiscences. This model of a perfect personal essay is a fragment of Lamb's personal autobiography. The essayist transmits his private and personal sufferings into something rich and strange. The essay, a prose poem, has the emotional intensity of a lyric. It gives vent to poignant feelings of Lamb's frustration in love as well as his hunger for children in this moving testament of his loving imaginative nature. His romantic sensibility is tempered with his sense of realism. It creates the unity of impressions like an ideal short essay written in the stream of consciousness technique.

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