

**Landon**  
**in**  
**The New Monthly**  
**1834**

A Poem in  
The New Monthly  
Magazine  
during the year 1834  
by  
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The Future

**THE FUTURE.**

BY L. E. L.

Ask me not, love, what can be in my heart ;  
When gazing on thee, sudden tear-drops start,  
When only smiles should brighten where thou art.

The human heart is compassed by fears;  
And joy is tremulous—for it inspheres  
A vapoury star, which melts away in tears.

I am too happy for a careless mirth ;  
Hence thoughts the sweet, yet sorrowful, have birth :—  
Who looks from heaven is half returned to earth.

I feel the weakness of my love—its care—  
How deep, how true, how passionate soe'er,  
It cannot keep one sorrow from thy share.

How powerless is my fond anxiety !  
I feel I could lay down my life for thee ;  
Yet know how vain such sacrifice must be !

Ah, the sweet present !—should it not suffice ?  
Not to humanity, which vainly tries  
To lift the curtain that may never rise !

Hence do we tremble in our happiness ;  
 Hurried and dim, the unknown hours press ;—  
 We question of the grief we cannot guess.

The Future is more present than the Past :  
 For one look back, a thousand on we cast ;  
 And hope doth ever memory outlast.

For hope, say fear. Hope is a timid thing,  
 Fearful and weak, and born 'mid suffering ;—  
 At least, such hope as our sad earth can bring.

Its home, it is not here, it looks beyond ;  
 And while it carries an enchanter's wand,  
 Its spells are conscious of their earthly bond.

We almost fear the presence of our joy ;  
 It doth tempt Fate, the stern one, to destroy,  
 Fate in whose hands this world is as a toy.

We dearly buy our pleasures, we repay  
 By some deep suffering ; or they decay  
 Or change to pain, and curse us by their stay.

A world of ashes is beneath our feet—  
 Cold ashes of each beautiful deceit,  
 Owned by long silent hearts, that beat as ours now beat.

How can we trust our own ? we waste our breath ;  
 We heap up hope and joy in one bright wreath ;—  
 Our altar is the grave—our priest is death.

But, ah ! death is repose ;—'tis not our doom,—  
 The cold, the calm, that haunts my soul with gloom :  
 I tremble at the passage to the tomb.

Love mine—what depths of misery may be  
 In the dark future !—I may meet thine eye,  
 Cold, careless, and estranged, before I die.

All grief is possible, and some is sure ;  
 How can the loving heart e'er feel secure,  
 And e'er it breaks it may so much endure ?

We had not lived had the past been foreshown ;  
 Ah ! merciful the shadow round us thrown.—  
 Thank heaven, the future is at least unknown !

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