

A SONG.

By WILLIAM T. SAWARD.



HIE! bird, hie! fly ever so high!
 My lover's awake, and the sun's in the sky:
 Sing me your sweetest,
 For she whom thou greekest
 Is queen of the earth, and star of the sea.
 Sing at her bars for me,
 Sing me a melodie,
 Bird of the wild wing, so happy and free!

Ho! bird, ho! fly ever so low!
 My love is asleep in her chamber, I know.
 Trill me a roundelay,
 As soft as the winds at play,
 Weave me a love song to spin through her dreams,
 Sing at her bars for me,
 Sing me a lullabye,
 Bird of the wild wing, so happy and free!

Hush! bird, hush! my beautiful thrush,
 Cease your mad song, your notes are all wrong—
 My loved one is dead, and her bridal bed
 Is the silent grave, where the willows wave—
 Your passionate singing
 Sets my heart ringing
 With a hope that is broken, and empty, and dead.

LYDIA'S CHANCES.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," etc.

"Catus amat pisces, sed non vult tingere plantas." ("The cat loves fish, but will not wet her paws.")—*Latin proverb.*

I HAVE often felt sorry for Lydia Longthorne. She is a middle-aged woman now and begins, I think, to look a little bit discontented. She says sharp things occasionally and shows prickles that appear to justify her name. One wonders that she is not a person of more importance, for she has qualities that ought to lift her out of the commonplace. She has been very handsome, her water-colour drawings which adorn her drawing-room are surprisingly good for an amateur, and such work as she undertakes in the parish is carried out nearly to perfection. She is a lady, and perhaps it is due to her consciousness of this fact that she has never taken a more definite line. The gentility of the Longthornes has been held up, both to themselves and others, to a degree that might well be detrimental to originality. And then Lydia has so little chin, barely enough for beauty, certainly not enough for firmness, and beyond question not enough for power.

The want of chin ought to be compensated for by the upper part of her face. Her brow is good and her eyes are striking. But she is not as clever-looking as she used to be. I saw a portrait of her when she was twenty, half her present age, and one felt the face was that of a brilliant woman who might make her mark. It was when I was looking at the photograph that Lydia gave me the clue to the fact that she knew she had not fulfilled the promise of her youth. She had read my thoughts perhaps, for she said, with a laugh and a sigh: "That looks as if I ought to have done something, doesn't it?"

"It does," I answered frankly.

And then she said suddenly: "Did you ever hear the proverb 'Catus amat pisces, sed non

vult tingere plantas?' Well, I have kept my paws dry, but I have never caught any fish."

"There is a commoner proverb," I said, "'Nothing venture, nothing have.' You, I suppose, have ventured nothing, for fear of losing what you had."

"And yet," she said, "looking back, I am not sure there was much to lose."

Her expression momentarily was so wistful that I felt very sympathetic towards her. I, too, have known what it is to regret not having risked a little to gain much; things look so different from a distance, but the child's toys are dear to it, and we cannot be wise until we are grown up.

Since then I have heard all about Lydia's life and know why it is painted in such quiet colours and why it looks to her even duller than it does to others.

She was one of a family of seven, and her father was the squire of this place. It is a very quiet place, and he and his wife were old-fashioned people, little in touch with the wider life of the outside world, and not at all with the ideas of their time. The children were educated carefully, especially as to their accomplishments; they were, however, all treated in exactly the same way because they were not expected to have any individuality. The three boys had the wholesome training of a public school. The daughters were taught at home. Lydia was the third and was always regarded as the troublesome one. She had more originality and more spirit than the others, and she would have liked to use her mind. She loved books, but the family trembled at the idea of her being too learned, and when she sought her volume of poetry, was set down to employ her leisure in crewl work. Her talent for painting, as more harmless, was encouraged, and her master was so pleased with her that he was desirous of her becoming an artist by profession.

"Why should she?" said her father.

"None of his daughters need earn their living. He would leave them enough to live on. And besides, Lydia would be sure to marry. Was not Mary to make an excellent match within a month? And then there would only be Sophia older; Lydia would go into society with her sister, and beyond a diversion what need had she of painting?"

The master, who had the soul of a true artist, saw that it was no use talking to Lydia's father. But he did not cease to talk to Lydia herself.

"You must study hard," he said, "and perhaps by-and-by further opportunities will come to you. Many a would-be artist has had to conquer greater difficulties than you, and keep himself from starving meanwhile."

Lydia listened. He spoke to her of the glory of hard work, of how all sacrifices of time and pleasure and ease were forgotten when the task was completed, and approached to the thought that had been in the mind at its beginning. He spoke of fame and the power it gives. He did all to inspire a lawful ambition in the mind of the clever young girl. And for a time he kindled it. But it was not proof against the obstacles which choked the flame and that fault of temperament which, no one having striven to cure in Lydia, was likely to damp all enterprise. She was too prone to drift. She did not seem able to see what was the thing she really desired, and for its sake to put aside the minor things which interfered with it. She frittered away her time in pursuits which she despised and which gave her no genuine satisfaction, because her sisters expected her to join in them and called her peculiar when she refused. She did not seem to realise that what might be harmless for them was waste of energy for her. And so she played croquet, and did fancy work and paid visits, and painted now and then, and she did not realise till it was too late the value of what she had thrown away. When I once