

ain musicians frequented the royal
places. Dame Ethel Smyth gives a
lightful account of her encounters with
what a refuge music had been from
cares of State! Ah! "Home, ho-ome, sweet,
sweet home!" It was too, too affecting.

£5000 a Year for Twelve Songs.

Tosti's Rise to Fame.

By EVA MARY-GREW.

AN acquaintance said to me recently: "What opera does Tosti come in?" I asked for fuller particulars. "You know," he said, "the Tosti of Tosti's 'Goodbye.'" Then I understood. For him, and I suppose for a good many others, the title "Tosti's 'Goodbye'" has the significance of such other titles as "Elizabeth's Prayer" and "Lohengrin's Narration:" it is impressed on his mind as a detail of some music drama.

This kind of fame is not a little wonderful: In this case the work enjoying it happens to have preserved the name of the maker of the work. But once in a while the maker is forgotten or overlooked. People speak of "The Rosary," for example; never of "Nevin's Rosary." A neighbour once told me that next term her daughter would be learning "The Prelude," and my grocer, who has a player-piano, asked me about the same time if I could tell him of a good, cheap music roll of "The Prelude." To each I said "Rachmaninoff's?" and in each instance the composer's name had no significance.

It is not surprising that Tosti should have gone into the title of his song; but I find that even in musical circles nothing seems to be known about him. He seems to be obliterated,—as is that individual, Tantalus by name, whose fate gave rise to the word "tantalise." Yet Tosti died as recently as 1916; and, though an Italian, he was an English knight,—Sir Francesco Paolo Tosti.

His ascent to fame on the wings of the songs he wrote is a picturesque story. In 1872, at the age of twenty-six, he was wandering the streets of Ancona with nothing to do, nowhere to go and with less than sixpence in his pocket; and for some days he had been living on oranges and stale bread. But in 1885, before he was forty, he was the friend of Italian and English dukes and duchesses and a welcome visitor to Queen Victoria; his songs were selling literally by the million, bringing him in enormous royalties; and Ricordi, the publisher, was paying him a retaining fee of one hundred pounds a week, for which

he had to do nothing except send in twelve new songs a year.

Tosti as a youth was poor, but he contrived to study under Mercadante, the composer of operas, who helped him to some teaching in a school in Naples at a salary of £2 10s. a month. He learned the violin, and wanted to be a famous violinist; but all he could do in this respect was to play in the back desk of the orchestra of an obscure Italian theatre.

At the age of twenty-two Tosti's health broke down, and for a long time he was ill. During that illness he wrote a song for a prize offered by the Florentine Art Society. The song was rejected. Then he wrote two other songs which he sent to Ricordi, and these also were rejected. At the age of twenty-four he contrived to get to Rome, where he found a patron in Sgambati, the composer, who helped him to give a concert at which royalty was present. The Princess Margherita (afterwards Queen of Italy) was captivated by his songs and his singing, and appointed him her teacher. Yet this could not have meant much at first, for the distressful Ancona period came two years later. However, it seems to have softened Ricordi's heart towards him, since in due course he accepted and published the two songs he had formerly rejected. They were "Ti rapirei" and "Penso," and Ricordi paid Tosti twenty pounds for the copyright of them when they had made good with the public. The Florentine song, "Vorrei morire," eventually brought the composer a small fortune.

In 1875 Tosti expended his last *soldo* on the adventure of a visit to London, and here he was befriended by an English woman who was interested in music. Very quickly he became a favourite in fashionable drawing-rooms; and little by little, working patiently and hard, he made his way upward until he was singing master to the royal family and a frequent private visitor to the Queen.

In 1880 Tosti settled permanently in London, and for many years he taught at the R.A.M. The songs which made him world-famous in the early eighties were

"Vespers," "For Ever and for Ever," "Goodbye," "That Day," "Aprile," "L'addio d'Amore," "Non m'ama più," and "Goodbye." In later life he aimed to compose more important songs than these drawing-room numbers; and, his taste improving, he produced such pieces as the "Mottinata" and "Serenata," both of which have recently been recorded for the gramophone.

Tosti was predestined for success. He mainly had the gift to write songs which his eulogists said forty-five years ago, "Tosti's" and the names of his songs few died naturally into fiction, as they still gain if they were bound to be familiar to the reader without any close particularisation. But he had those still more essential of the for success, adaptability and tact: a fact which I will make clear by copying some notes from a letter written to Wilkie Collins in 1887 by Blanche Roosevelt, who met him while she was in Milan in Febru-

ary, 1887, for the production of Verdi's "Otello:" "He possesses to an extraordinary degree the most valuable natural or acquired quality that any human being can possess; this gift is more than beauty, more than talent or riches or birth or position,—it is the simple word of four letters called TACT; I don't believe there is a man in the world who possesses this attribute in a more supreme degree than Tosti."

It is the glory of the supremely great men that in their lives the man still transcends his achievement; and perhaps it was so with this lesser man, the song writer Tosti, for he was honourable and conscientious and splendidly hardworking. No other song writer in any age has had such a career, and few public successes in art have been so well deserved. On the altar of remembrance he deserves more than a sprig of rosemary. He ought not to be forgotten: still less ought he to be merged into the title of one of his songs.