

Rodgers says, "but it isn't really true. There's a great deal more to writing a song than just putting the notes down on paper. I may have done months of work on it before I get to that stage. Take 'Bali H'ai' from 'South Pacific,' for example. It's true that just a few minutes after Oscar delivered the lyrics I had completed the song. But we had discussed it for eight months. I knew the title. I knew the situation in which it was to be sung. I had been working on it mentally for months, so naturally it was easy to set down."

Things have always been easy for Dick Rodgers. There was only one brief period in his life when he knew failure. That was immediately after he left Columbia University when he and Lorenz Hart couldn't find any takers for their songs. But since the first Rodgers and Hart show, "Garrick Gaieties," was produced in 1925, Dick Rodgers has been one of America's foremost composers.

When Larry Hart died shortly before they were to start work on "Oklahoma!" Rodgers turned to Hammerstein, an old friend for whom he had great respect. Neither the respect nor the friendship has diminished over the 15 years of their partnership.

Rodgers was married to Dorothy Feiner in 1930. The Rodgerses have two daughters, Mary and Linda, both married. They also have four grandchildren, a family home in Southport, Conn., and an apartment in mid-town Manhattan where Dick stays frequently when he is working in the city. Although his Manhattan office contains a grand piano, he does all his composing at home.

"My piano sits right out in the living room, in the middle of the traffic flow. That never bothers me. In fact, I used to try out some of my tunes on the girls when they were small."

Rodgers works with tremendous power of concentration and normally writes the music to fit Hammerstein's lyrics. But this isn't always the case. For example, "Younger Than Springtime," the haunting love song from "South Pacific," was a melody he had played for several years for his children. When Hammerstein heard it, he insisted it be written into the show.

Hammerstein, seven years older than his partner, is a considerable contrast to Rodgers—in physical appearance as well as in personal characteristics. Tall, big-boned, with a seamed face beneath a close-cropped crew cut, Hammerstein is formidable in appearance but gentle, soft-spoken, and much more reserved than Rodgers. He spends most of his time on his farm near Doylestown, Pa., where

he does practically all of his creative work in a second-floor study.

He frequently struggles with lyrics, working them over and over until he gets exactly the effect he wants. He spent most of a day composing a single line, "The corn is as high as an elephant's eye," for "Oklahoma!"

Hammerstein has a highly developed social consciousness, as reflected in such lyrics as "You've Got to Be Taught," "All Kinds of People," "What's the Use of Wonderin'?" and "You'll Never Walk Alone." He wept recently when he turned on a radio and unexpectedly heard "The March of the Siamese Children" from "The King and I"—a Rodgers melody he must have heard a thousand times.

HAMMERSTEIN also has a great many outside activities which he takes seriously: he's president of the Authors League of America and a member of the Council of the Dramatists' Guild and the Writers' Board for World Government.

Unlike Rodgers, Hammerstein's career has been full of ups and downs. A member of an old and distinguished theatrical family and the theater's leading lyricist in the early '30s—with such hits as "Show Boat," "Rose Marie," and "The Desert Song"—

Hammerstein hit a ten-year dry spell that ended when he teamed with Rodgers for "Oklahoma!" in 1943.

The Hammersteins, who were married in 1929, have five children, two each from previous marriages plus their son, Jimmy.

Both Rodgers and Hammerstein are tireless perfectionists. Road companies are formed and rehearsed under their direct supervision and are checked periodically by them. When the national company of "South Pacific" was nearing its Chicago run, Rodgers searched the country for a theater similar in size to the one they would use in Chicago, found one in Minneapolis, and booked the show there for a week while he personally worked with the cast to adjust their performance to the theater's size.

"When we have a show running in New York," Rodgers says, "I watch a performance at least once a week. If the show loses any of its spontaneity, we rehearse until we find it again."

Of all their work together, the partners are happiest with "Carousel." "It's the most mature of our plays in both subject matter and realization," says Rodgers.

R & H have supervised their motion-picture properties as carefully as their stage plays, even though the medium is not as familiar to them. Excluding "South Pacific," which was just opening in movie houses as this was written, Rodgers feels that "The King and I" came through best on the screen. It was also the most successful financially of the R & H movies.

In a hectic and frequently neurotic business, Rodgers and Hammerstein operate in an oasis of sanity and sincerity. They never refuse an audition to anyone; they answer letters and return phone calls; they work in an atmosphere of quiet professional competence; their personal habits are moderate—neither man smokes and both drink sparingly, if at all. They've never had a serious argument and probably never will. And they are remarkably humble. After many years of solid successes, Rodgers still qualified the opening date of "Flower Drum Song" with "if we get it to New York."

"Nothing is really predictable in this business," he continued, "not even the songs. Sometimes we think we can anticipate the ones that are going to be hits, but often we get fooled. We wrote 'Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'!

just to bring up the curtain in 'Oklahoma!' Some of it was even sung off-stage without accompaniment. Same way with 'You'll Never Walk Alone' in 'Carousel.' It was sung by a minor character in a situation hardly conducive to making it a popular favorite. Yet both of these songs turned out to be hits. On the other hand, I think one of my best melodies is 'I Have Dreamed' from 'The King and I.' It was never a hit and was cut out of the movie completely."

But these things are all part of the business and both men accept such problems philosophically. They were disappointed in the failure of "Allegro" to capture popular fancy, and had high hopes for "Pipe Dream," too. But even R & H "failures" are successes by normal standards. So respected are they in the business that the yardstick by which their works are measured is often in a class by itself. This is one of the penalties of the great success they have enjoyed. But it doesn't weigh on them. Not a bit.

Parodying one of his own lyrics, Hammerstein summed it up, "We're in love with a wonderful theater."

