

JOTTINGS

by MAN ABOUT TOWN

Men Of Fun

What began with my expression of dislike for the word 'comic' to describe a professional

comedian looks like developing into a search for what may prove to be a gallery of 'immortals'. When I raised the subject first, I asked for the names of Irish comedians who had attained international fame equal say, to Harry Lauder, Will Rogers or George Formby. I wasn't very confident that there would be many claimants forthcoming. Then, if you remember I recorded on Friday last how Mr Gifford of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had come up with several names of Irish men of fun who had, in their day, reputations in two continents at least. Mr Gifford mentioned the names of Pat Rafferty, the founder of the McCormack tradition, and others.

Great Man, Too

This evening I publish a claim from Mr Patk. Houlihan, Mount Street, Dublin, and a former townsman of

Killorglin, Co Kerry, made on behalf of another Irishman whose name you all know, a great man, too, in his prime. Mr Houlihan writes: "As one of your M.A.T. gang, allow me to take advantage of your invitation to support the claim of an Irish comedian to international fame. My vote goes to a long departed trouper whose jokes are still being told and whose songs are still being sung, not only here in Ireland but also in England and in most of the New World, where his name towards the turn of the century became a household word. I refer to none other than the inimitable Johnny Patterson, the famous comedian and circus clown."

Original cutting on P2. A letter Pa sent to a newspaper during his time in Dublin illustrates his long standing loyalty to the legacy of Johnny Patterson

Maker Of Songs

Mr Houlihan emphasises that Johnny flourished in a period when there was no aid from films, radio,

television and when even the gramophone was only in its infancy. He, therefore, attained his fame in a purely personal way, a point with which we must agree, not only in regard to Johnny, but also in the cases of all great comedians and artists of that period. Will Rogers, for example, would never have become a world-wide figure had it not been for the films. And, here I must interrupt to ask, why is it that with all these aids today, we are not seeing many of our professional comedians climbing the ladder of international fame? However, to return to Johnny Patterson - Mr Houlihan mentions that the famous Irish clown was also a maker of songs of merit.

His Last Joke

One of these was recorded recently in America, Mr Houlihan says. It was about the

town of Killorglin and a pretty girl who lived there called Biddy Donoghue. Johnny, apparently, was a comedian up to the last hours of his life. On the night before he died in hospital in Tralee the doctor remarked: "I'll come to see you again in the morning." "Thanks Doc," answered Johnny, "but will I see you!" Most people would, I am sure, like to have the epitaph that poor Johnny had. It isn't written; it just lives in the memories of the people of Killorglin, and this is it: "The only time he caused sadness was when he died." That, I know, would be a fine recommendation for a man to be able to present when his soul stood before the Judgement Seat.

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Maker Of Songs MR. Houlihan emphasises that Johnny flourished in a period when there was no aid from films, radio, television and when even the gramophone was only in its infancy. He, therefore, attained his fame in a purely personal way, a point with which we must agree, not alone in regard to Johnny but also in the cases of all great comedians and artists of that period. Will Rogers, for example, would never have become a world-wide figure had it not been for the films. And, here I must interrupt to ask, why is it that with all these aids today, we are not seeing many of our professional comedians climbing the ladder of international fame? However, to return to Johnny Patterson—Mr. Houlihan mentions that the famous Irish clown was also a maker of songs of merit.

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