

The Human Side of the Potato

By GRACIE FIELDS

WE Music-hall artists have to be funny, from time to time, about things we love, familiar, domestic, personal things, like the kipper and the mother-in-law. It is expected of us, part of our fate, which we cannot escape.

Our audiences like to hear what we think about such things, in the terms of comedy. They don't mind us bringing in a few affectionate touches, so long as we are funny. It helps them when we point out the comic side of domestic life . . . which isn't always funny, needless to say.

Now whilst the mother-in-law and the kipper are what I might call "common stock" for the use of any comic singer who likes to deal with the funny side of them, there are other domestic subjects which have been taken up by specialists. And of these, vegetables, in general and particular, seem to form a special study. Who can forget the great Harry Champion, with his *Boiled Beef and Carrots*, and his *Baked Sheep's Heart, Stuffed with Sage and Onions*? Not entirely vegetarian: but he did share the gusto with the vegetables as well as the meat. And was there not a touching ballad sung not long ago, I think Billy Leonard, which begged us "Never be Cruel to a Vegetabuel, remember that a Lettuce has a Heart," and ended its sad refrain by the reminder that whenever we ordered Brussels sprouts we were Robbing the Cabbage of its Young?

These songs, I am sure, struck a tender note in pit and gallery. But who has ever said a tender word for the Potato?

Usually referred to as the Humble Potato, but I really do not see why. What is there humble about it? There are lots of people not nearly as useful in their lives as the potato, and not nearly as necessary to human happiness. There are countries where the potato is about the most important thing in daily life. It has no need to be humble there.