

BRANSTON MARKET GARDENER
LABOURING CONDITIONS OF SIXTY YEARS AGO

Mr Edward Cram, of Branston, who is almost as well known in Lincoln, especially to the city's market day habitues, as he is in his adopted village, was contemplating various interesting exhibits at Branston Flower Show when we found him and reminded him of an old standing promise of a chat "some day" on his recollections of his early days, and the conditions than prevailing amongst the labouring men, with whose status he has always had very deep and heartfelt sympathy. In the Flower Show he was, of course, quite at home, because he has been concerned with gardening in one form and another practically ever since he began to understand what life meant in any serious degree. But looking on lovely flowers and abnormal vegetables were one thing, and chatting over matters for the purpose of newspaper publication was quite another, for Mr Cram is one of the most unostentatious and unassuming of men, and while not averse to a quiet chat over the times that were for some reason termed "good old days," but that seem to have deserved any title other than that, he looks askance at notebook and pencil, and is inclined to plead that his privacy shall not be intruded upon. But he is good "copy" and he would not be a journalist worth his salt who, having secured the chance of conversation with his man, did not make something of it. Not that Mr Cram has a great deal of time to chat about anything, the point was to utilise the little time he had to spare while we estimated the weights and values of mammoth marrows, preternatural peas and Brobdignagian beans.

Mr Cram, to begin with, is not a native of Branston, or of anywhere in the Lincoln district. He hails from the sequestered parish of Croft, close to the seaside resort of Skegness - a place that is much more known at the present day, as Skegness also is better known, than it was in the days of Mr. Cram's youth. At the time few people could have told you where Croft was, and there are those possibly, who hearing the name now, will admit that their wisdom is not a great deal more extensive. However it was here, on the breeze-swept Lincolnshire flats, where the salt is in the air and in the land, that Mr. Cram first saw the light, as the son of a farm foreman.

In that he was in a sense, lucky, for the farm foreman of those days was a very great amount better off than the labourer, who, beyond the natural gifts of life and health, had not a vast deal to be thankful for. What young Cram saw of their state, was, therefore, more in the capacity of sympathetic onlooker than from any actual experience of his own. But even the household of a farm foreman feels the pinch when wheat is up to £5 a quarter, as it was at one period of painful remembrance. Those were the days when one half of the world did not know how the other half

lived, and certainly when well-to-do folk realised little how the poorer class of agricultural folk got their meal. Mr. Cram will sketch for you a vivid picture of what things were like in those days, for he was a first-hand witness. His memory he declares, is failing, but it is not failing so much that he has forgotten the miseries, the sacrifices and the troubles that were the common lot of the poor agricultural labourers in those days, Moreover, he never will forget.

THE PENALTY OF POVERTY

Poverty was not then and never has been in the annals of English history, a crime, let ranting agitators declaim as the may. But it was a bitter battle for a living, a period when the breadwinner had to fight with his back to the wall to gain a living for himself and those he held most dear. A living is perhaps a high name to give to the provided fare that was seen day by day on the labourer's table. Mr. Cram tells of bread at close on a shilling a loaf at a