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Original Correspondence

[To the Editor of the *North Devon Journal*]

THE GUDE OLD TIMES IN WELCOMBE

Zur,—A hunderd yers ago smugglin wis in vull swing in this plase, and wis considered a lawful himploymint in them days, an inny wan thit wud hinform ware run goods wis deposited, wud be thort tu hev kommitted the honpardonable sin, wile vur kill the hixise man, wis thort but little ov. Thay yused tu tell the tale this thare wis a grave in Mustow churchyard, thit no grass wud grow auver cus the man thit wis berry'd thare wis hanged honjustly; thit thay bribed a lot ov witnesses tu go down tu Bodmin against the man, an awl he had dude wis vur kill the hexise man, zo thay zed thay beg'd his body an brort it hoam and berry'd it, an thet no grass wud iver grow thare; I muss tell'ee, thet I went auver a litel wile ago vur luke, an I dudden zee no sitch a grave. Hivery body wis in favor ov it, gentry an poor vokes, an som zed the passons wud wink at it tew. Thare yused tu be a tale thit a stranger kom'd down vrum hup about London

wan time jist as a landin wis gwain tu take plase, an he thort twis somthin dredful, an he hollow'd owt tu naw if thare wis no majistrate lived near? The answer was, "No, thank God, not less thin ayt miles." "Is thare no passon then." "Iss, thets he holdin the lantern." Besides this, thare wis minny other old kustoms thit is changed now, an be neerly a forgot. Wan thing wis bindin the littel childern owt way the farmers as parrish prentisses wen thay wis zeben yur old. When the Lady-day vestery meetin wis a kom, the pore vokes thit had got childern owld enuf wud take min hup tu Church, jist as thay take a sheap or a kow tu the fare. An the farmers wid agree tugether hew shude take Willy, an hew shude take Tommy, an keep min avaur thay wis twenty-wan. The pairtin ov the mother an the childern wud be a sad site tu zee somtimes, vur the littel crayters wud luke hup tu thare mothers, an cling tu min, an want fur go hoam way min agen. I've zeed a picter kald the zillin ov the pet lam, an I think som wan hoft tu drae owt wan ov takin the childern away vrum thare mothers. Jist think ov it, yu mothers, wud yu like tu pairt way yer peart littel boy or maid ov 7? Think ov it wen yu put yer little Nelly tu baid an kiss her avaur her gothe tu slayp, an wen yu zen Dicky off tu skule tu larn his letters. Think of it wen yume hinklined vur zay the vormer times wis better thin thayse. How wud yu like vur let a ruff farmer like thay was in them days hev yore boy tu put en owt skrapin mud an pickin stoans in the feelds or weedin turnips ware verry likely he wud git stogged in the mud. The law is changed now, an thay cant put min owt like it. Thare wis wan put owt som yurs arter twis altered, dun by consent ov the parents an the boy cus thay wis poor, an the varmer thit he went way told en if he wud stay owt the time he wud give en a watch, but the chapp zed, "He want be no gude tu me, I shant naw hot time tis by en." Thank goodness, thayse things be altered, an now thares gwain be a borde skule in the parrish, ware awl the littel wans will be abel tu larn hot thare fathers niver nawd. A man towld me wanse thit wen he wis a prentiss he waur sheap-skin britches, an thay wud be wet auver nite, an he wud put min awn jist as thay was, an twis like deth about his legs, but he wud hev tu go owt in the wet agen to vetch the hosses vrum the feelds awl dru the wet grass, an the close wud dry, he zed, pon the same hedge thit it got wet hupon. Another owld kustom in Welcomebe was

The hannyel zale of slaves

thit tuke plase in the Church tew, cus thare wis no vestry. Thare yused tu be som vokes livin about yer, thit was rathur zart, an som thit cude hardly mentayn thersels, an thit had got no hoam, an hinsted ov puttin mun tu the yunyen like they do now, thay wud take min tu Church wanse a yur an put min hup to hockshun, an zill min not for iver, but vur wan yur, and not tu the highest bidder but tu the lawest. Jack Ashton, or "Dum Jack" as he yused tu be kald, Kitty Metherall, Betty Ashton, an Betty Adams hev bin zowld like thet a gude minny times auver. Thay wud zay—"Now wat will ee take Jack Ashton vor?" Wan wud say dree pownd, then tu pownd, wan pownd, an praps thay wud rin down tu a shillen, cus thay wis vokes abel tu work. Then thay wud put laburers hup to hockshen in the same way, an thay wud agree pon how much the parish shude pay vur a sartin farmer tu make hup a man's wages tu zaben shillens a week. In them days if a man cude git work in a nether parrish he cudden go acress cus he wud belong tu the parrish arter a sartin time. Wile I'm tellin about the Church I mite tell ee some moar owld kustoms thit yused tu prevayl yer. Wan was that thare wis awlweys a line in the churchwarden's akount—zo much vur oilin the bells and zo much vur liftin the ladder tu the church, zo they hinqured into it an vound thit oilin the bells maynt a fayst vur the ringers. Liftin the ladder wis a fayst vur the mason an sexon. 'Tis the jeneral kustom yur tu wal hup a grave zo var as tu take the flat stoans thit thay put acress tu kover the koffin, zo wen the sexon wud haupen an old grave he wudden yuse the flat stoans agen honless the vokes payd en vive shillens, zo a vu yurs ago wan man thort thay didden belong tu he, an the man tuk min away. The sexon had en tuke hup vur staylin the stoans, but the majistrates dismissed the case, an the nex vestry meetin the vokes helected anether sexon. Wan moar owld custom avaur I go awn to me tale. Wen the sexon had got a grave vur dig he wud go to and vrom the public howse an hang hup a skawr vur the frends to pay arter the berrin wis auver. Pore old Joe More, durin the feefty yur thit he wis konnected way et muss hev made a gude menny skawrs ov thet kind. Wan time he got awverkome an vall'd down vrum the futepath as he turned in vrum Gurgey Hill tu go acress the meddaw, an thare he lide till som vokes passed an helped en back tu Blue Fox agen. Zince his day wan sexon got zo bad wen he wis finishing the grave thit thay had vur helpen owt vur put the korpse in. Som yurs ago the boddy thit had tu pay the hexpenses of a berrin grumbeld about it, an wan ov the partys konsarned zed, "Wat kin inny boddy zay sitch times," I spose thay thort twis no harm

vur git awl thay cude owt ov the wans thit wis gwain tu pay. Wen thare wis a baby tu be baptised durin Parson Hawker's time he wud hev the back dore haupened, an wud karry the cheeld hup dru the hile an zay, "We take this cheeld," an zo awn. He had the back dore haupen'd, he wud zay, this the divil mite got owt thet way. Ware the back ov the churchyard wis gied hup tu he or no, I don't naw, but they didden berry noboddy thare but littel babys thit hadden bin a krisend, an thay wud play rasslin out thare. Wan time thare wis som chapps thare tu play, an wan draw'd anether, an put his neck owt ov joynt, but wan ov thay wat wis standin thare pull'd in agen, but he was niver rite in his neck tu this day. They named en Lucky Tom, an the wan thit pull'd in his neck thay kal'd Howard the philanthropist. Tom zed he wud niver play way he no *Moar*. Thare wis tu klose a konneckshun betwayn the Church an the Blu Fox. Yurs ago lots ov vokes wud go auver tu church stile, ang hinstayd ov gwain in they wud go in vur hev a pint or tew, an som thit did go tu church wud turn in arter prare, an stap vur howers. Thet plase, zur, wis the rewin of a gude minny. Wan man that lived thare wis a malster, but he wudden pay the dooty vur awl he made, cus hed got a howt howse way a chimbley in en, an a chimber hup auver thet noboddy nawd of, cus the henterance to the rume wis vrum the chimbley, an thet wis how he kard awn the trick vur yurs. He wis moar cliver thin some I've yerd about lately, thet hev got catched an fined vor et. He niver got catch'd at all, but anether man thit yused vur live auver tu Cross Town tride it aun arter he was ago, an he zune got into it, an had vur go tu Exeter jail moastly vur the tether man's gwain aun, cus he tuke hoff the howse way the haups ov duin the trick like the tether man,

Tu be continuyd.

Yours truly,

R. GILES

Welcombe, September 19th, 1885