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**Text type:** Prose

**Date of composition:** 1885

**Editions:** 1885

**Source text:**

Giles, R. 1885. "The Gude Old Times in Welcombe". *North Devon Journal*, July 23: 6.

**e-text**

**Access and transcription:** March 2021

**Number of words:** 836

**Dialect represented:** Devonshire

**Produced** María F. García-Bermejo Giner

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THE GUDE OLD TIMES IN WELCOMBE

Zur,—Som vokes say the former times wis better thin theyse, but they thit say it doant live yer, or, at any rate, they didden in the harely pairt of this century, wen I wis a boy, an if thay'd had to fare like moast of the pore vokes did in them days, they wid agree with me wen I say thit the times be a lot better now. Wy, zur, 60 or 70 yurs ago, the cheef fude of the laburin class was barley brayd, tettys, and turmits, and hoften they cudden git enuf of thet, You'll beleeve me, zur, wen I tell ee thit wen men wurked vur 7 shillins a week, and whayt wis frum 12 to 15 shillins a bushell, thit thay cudden hev much of it and thit the pore vokes wis nearly haf starved.

If wun shude be bit better hoff thin the rest an cud git a pig, he had to sill nearly wan harf to by sault for to save the other pairt, but I cin tell ee, zur, this wis a lucksery very fu cude hinjoy. Yurs ago I've yurd some of the hold men tell wat faysts there used to be at the farmhouses and other places at Krismas and sitch times, and wid tell so much of the gude things they used to hev thit the'd make yur mouth water for some of it. No doubt 'twas a greet treat fir min to put their legs hunder thare measter's tabel for wanst

and git a gude skinful, and hev a jollification, and git a bit fresh avore thay went hoam. But you see, zur, the wife and childern wid be hoam and hev to go to bed with a pore supper.

I shude a sed, zur, thit wen thare wis gude ketches of herrins at Clawvelly, the nuse wid sprayd like wildfire, and the pore crayturs wid be so glad as if a ship had cum home from say.

My father used to try and save up a vu shillens against the time, and he'd take the old "Jimmy" and be hoff. But he cudden by enuf to satisfy us all and thay had to be very sparín over min; even old Dick Sandercock, liven down to Blackpool, they wid hev wan herrin for he and his wive Grace and old Will Stanbury.

I wis tellin this to a man some time ago and he sed the peepel wis stronger in them days thin thay be now cause 'twas elthy to live pon vegetabels. Wot I want to naw is if they think so why thay doant try it as thay cude git the same soart of things now. Well, as I sed, men got 7s. a week, that was wen they had work to do, wich wasent always, and then the farmers used to give min a shillen a day to brayk stoans on the rawds jist to keep min from starvin. The pore childern wen they wis seven yers hold wid be bound out as parish prentices, and wid hev to stay avore they wis twenty wun jist vur thare mayt and close. Wat I've a sed, zur, is perfectly tru and kin be prued by miny liven to this day, and I cude teil ee a lot moar but I'm afeerd I shal vill up yer paper too much. I think I've sed enuf to shaw that the condishen of the lower klasses wis moast ritched. And now, zur, I want to shaw ee thit things is haltered. Neerly ivery body in the parish keepth a kow, and kin do it, for wages is neerly dubble wot it was, and corn and many other things is about haf the prise wat it was then, and there is only two paupers in the parish. Hinstead of a man lookin vore to a fayst wanse a yer he can hev it with es wive and childern ivery day. Beesides there is a chance now to git the childern heddicated very different vrum wat twas wen I wis yong, vur I had to go out to hearn me own liven at the age wen childern be to skule now a days, and witch thay think a hardship. I'm viry glad I've lived to see theyse and other changes. I'm gitten an old man now, but before I leave this world I want to remind the youngsters of a fu of the disvantages thare forefathers had to labor under. I forgot to sey thit wen the tetty crops failed a kindharted gentleman, Mr Barlett, used to hev hoam rice and pays and wid giv it away and sill it cheep to the pore, and so I beleeve he kept min from starvin.



The Salamanca Corpus: "The Gude Old Times in Welcombe" (23rd July 1885)

In my next letter I hop to give ee som account of the old kustoms and superstishens  
thit used to be common yer in the harely days of your,

Obayjent sarvant.

Welcombe, July 18, 1885

R. GILES

