

of feasts continually increase. Athenæus describes an entertainment given by an ancient Gaelic prince to his whole people, and all strangers who chose to attend: it lasted for a whole year, according to that author, and the bill of fare consumed, he states, was such as would astonish the world. A feast among the ancient Britons appears, by the following description, to have been a very different affair from the annual banquet at Apsley House, or even a great political dinner, not to mention the Lord Mayor's display. The dishes in which the meat was served up were either of wood, earthenware, or a kind of baskets made of osiers. The guests sat in a circle upon the ground: a low table or stool was set before each person, with a portion of the meat allotted to him upon it. In this distribution they never neglected to set the largest and best pieces before those who were most distinguished for their rank, their exploits, or their wealth.

There is a tradition in Ireland regarding a Celtic chief, whose pride and generosity are said to have been equally remarkable. He had made a feast, the last of many by which his rule was distinguished; but finding his funds utterly inadequate to go beyond the second day, and less than three being considered niggardly in his land and times, he contrived a hunt for the company on the morning of the third, leaving orders with his servants to burn the castle in their absence, as the only possible apology for abridging the festivities. The legend adds—his command was executed, and the chief, with all his family, went to seek their fortune on the continent, whence none of them ever returned.

Dryden's well-known poem, 'Alexander's Feast,' records a similar, but far more deplorable event—the burning of a great city, the ancient capital of Persia, which was fired by Alexander and his officers in the frenzy of intoxication, at a feast held within its walls. Passing to pleasanter though ruder scenes of the festal order in the extreme north: a feast usually takes place on any part of the Greenland coast where a whale happens to be stranded, the fare being furnished by the great fish. The young men of whatever tribe has despatched or discovered it—for freshness is by no means a requisite to Greenland cheer—assemble and construct a long low house of snow, there being no scarcity of such building materials. A circular hole in the end, generally facing the south, is left for the entrance of the company; the interior is covered with skins till not a particle of the snow is visible, and heated with large earthen lamps, in which all manner of oily matter is kept constantly burning. Then the viands, prepared by the active hands of the ladies, and consisting of all the flesh of the whale, and as much train oil as could be conveniently extracted, are arranged on the centre of the floor in Esquimaux fashion—the solids in the middle, and the oil, accompanied with stronger liquids, if such can be procured from any trading whaler, set round in coarse earthen vessels by way of liquor. All being ready, the invitations are immediately given by the young men, who run for that purpose from family to family. They are as speedily accepted; and when all the guests have arrived, the entrance hole is closed with a strong barricade made of driftwood, to keep out the polar bears; but within, the revelry continues with little intermission, till the whale is entirely eaten up, and the snow house, in spite of the external cold, begins to melt away from its numerous inhabitants.

The feasts of former times have furnished some of the most striking subjects for modern poetry. The Holy-wood banquet described in Scott's 'Marmion,' and that in the opening scene of the 'Lord of the Isles,' will occur to every reader. Mrs. Hemans, in her 'Kaiser's Feast,' has epitomised the story of a German emperor, who, having warred with his only brother for years, and at length succeeded in dispossessing him of the throne, was informed of his death in exile and poverty, and presented with his orphan children in the midst of a splendid banquet. The old and much diversified legend of a spectral and uninvited guest appearing to claim broken promises, or announce retribution, at the banquet where successful treachery or injustice held the highest place, is familiar to the poets of Europe, and contains a sounder moral than those generally attributed to the rude and superstitious times in which it had its origin. Spectres may still appear at life's feasts, though not of the kind common in old stories, that made the lights burn blue. By a sort of contrast, these reflections recall a singular version of the Barmecide's feast, said to have been en-

acted by the notable Beau Brummell in his latter days. The beau lived to be old and paralytic, his fortune was considerably diminished, and those of his former friends or rivals whom he had not survived had forgotten him when no longer seen to reign over dinners, and legislate in ballrooms; but the ruling passion was still with Beau Brummell, and in the long winter evenings he was accustomed to indulge it with make-believe dinner-parties in the fashion of other days, every little of which was as exactly imitated as his most faithful memory could command; and there the old man sat, in his solitary room, pouring forth the ancient strain of compliment and salutation. 'My dear duchess, I have been dying to see you this fortnight!' 'Almost late, my lord; it is Lady Charlotte or the poet should account for it?' And so he went on, addressing beauties, ministers, and litterateurs, long dead, and mostly forgotten, as one after another they were announced, according to his directions, by the footman, who used to shudder years afterwards at the recollection of his own terrified expectations, as every name sounded through the lonely house.

In short, many and curious have been the varieties and accompaniments of feasts; but with the last-mentioned specimen we conclude for the present, proposing to return to the second division of our subject—Festivals and Holidays—in a succeeding article.

## THE EXAMINER.

CHARLOTTETOWN, JANUARY 1, 1849.

### PLAN OF A NEW AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

WE observed in the Gazette of Tuesday last a Letter addressed to His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, signed by seven or eight gentlemen, in which it is proposed to form a new Agricultural Society, on what is believed to be a broader basis than that on which the Royal Society is placed. It is contemplated to have Branch Societies at Princetown, Cascumpeque, Souris, and Georgetown, all of which to be under the controul of the Society in Charlottetown—that the Government is to have the power of appointing a Secretary and Treasurer for each Society—and that the Legislature is to advance to the Central Society a sum of money equal in amount to what may be raised by subscriptions. We extract from the Letter referred to the following outline of a Constitution for the proposed Societies, from which our readers will derive a clearer idea of their means of promoting the object in view, than we can give in a summary:—

"1st—That a Central Society be established in Charlottetown, to be conducted by a President, Vice President, seven Directors, and a Secretary and Treasurer: that such Central Society be incorporated by Act of Assembly, with all necessary powers to make Bye Laws, &c. The office of Secretary and Treasurer to be in the appointment of the Governor and Council, the others to be annually elected by the subscribers. The accounts of the Society's expenditure, with a full report of their proceedings, to be annually laid before the Executive, in the same way as other Public Accounts, and to be subject to the like audit.

"2nd—That an annual subscription of Five Shillings should constitute the person subscribing, a Member. That each annual Subscriber, of not less than Five Pounds per annum, should be eligible to be elected President. That each annual Subscriber of not less than One Pound per annum, should be eligible to be elected a Director.

"3rd—That the Central Society should, on being organized, proceed to establish five Branch Societies, viz: one at Cascumpeque, one at Bedeque, one at Princetown, one at Georgetown, and one at Souris; that such Branch Societies should each consist of a President, Vice President, and Secretary and Treasurer, the last officer to be appointed by the Governor and Council, the others to be elected.

"4th—That each annual Subscriber to any Branch Society, of not less than Twenty Shillings, should be eligible to be elected President or Vice President of such Branch Society; and each annual Subscriber of not less than Five Shillings, should be eligible to be elected a Director of such Society.

"5th—That each Branch Society should have the management of its own affairs, but should be compelled at regular periods to account to the Central Society, and that the Central Society should have the power of control over them, in preventing an improper application of their funds.

"6th—That it should be the duty of the Central Society to make importations of Seeds, Stock, &c., required by all the Societies, who should be supplied from the Central Society's Warehouse at cost price. That all Live Stock imported or purchased, should be equally divided between the different Branch Societies,

so that the Central Society should not have a larger proportion than any Branch Society.

"7th—That for keeping up a more intimate connexion between the Central and the Branch Societies, each Branch Society should be entitled to appoint one of its Members to act as a Director of the Central Society, such Directors to be in addition to those elected by the Central Society, and that the Central Society should have the power of appointing Visitors, whose duty it should be, at certain periods, to visit the Branch Societies, inspect their Accounts, ascertain their wants, and report on the state of their affairs, and use their endeavours to stimulate the people to support the Societies, and thereby increase their usefulness."

We have no wish to offer the least discouragement to the formation of the proposed Societies. We have at all times, we believe, manifested the most ardent desire to promote the agricultural interests of the Colony, and, as a public journalist, we will still assist, to the utmost of our power, in the achievement of any plan having this interest in view. But the question does, and must arise, Has the Royal Agricultural Society failed to carry out the object of its establishment? or, is a new Society likely to effect more than it has yet achieved? If the new Society go into operation, the old must become powerless at once, or gradually dwindle into insignificance. The old Society has, we believe, more than 150 Subscribers, with funds to nearly the amount expected to be raised by the new one; and it is quite reasonable to suppose that the Legislature would make as large an appropriation in favour of the present Society, as it would on behalf of any other that could be established to supercede it. With the limited means at its disposal, and the small assistance it has hitherto received from the Legislature—most of the grants of public money being in the shape of loans—it must be confessed that the Royal Agricultural Society has given considerable encouragement to the farming interest, by improving Stock, introducing new and improved implements of husbandry, and in exciting competition, by means of their Ploughing Matches, Grain and Cattle Shows. The only striking feature which, it appears, would distinguish the proposed Society from the existing one, is, that articles imported would be sold to the Branch Societies at cost prices, whereas the Royal Society charges ten per cent. on the cost prices; and this was found necessary to provide for the incidental expenses of the Society. But if the House of Assembly could be induced to give to it the same extent of support as it is thought would be obtained for the proposed Society—and we think the chances in favour of the former in this respect are as great as they would be for the latter—Branch Societies could be formed and supplied without the additional charge of 10 per cent. But we forget—there are other important benefits to be gained, in the opinion of its projectors, by the formation of the new Society: with a thousand pounds annually at its disposal (supposing £500 to come out of the public chest, a supposition, we fear, not likely to be realized for some years at least), which would be about 4d. to each inhabitant, "short crops would be rarely heard of, and general want and distress be entirely unknown"! The Royal Society certainly could not hope of bringing about this halcyon state of things—it was not designed to avert the decrees of an all-wise Providence, and save the potatoe plant from disease, and the wheat from rust. But if the gentlemen who have signed the letter to His Excellency think that so much good can be accomplished, why do they not combine energetically with the old Society—participate in its management, and devote to it their means and talents? or is there rottenness in the heart of it, as fatal to its efficiency as the murrain is to the usefulness of the potatoe?

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT AT LAST.—In the *Islander's* editorial of Friday week there were two admissions which we forgot to notice in replying to that article in our last No. It commenced with saying that THE EXAMINER of the 11th ult. was the "reflection of his Satanic Majesty at large," and in the next sentence we were told that it was the second edition of "the veritable Palladium." It is easy enough to account for the feeling which prompted the allusion to "his Satanic Majesty:" the *Islander* editor felt, and justly, that THE EXAMINER of the 11th ult. "played the very devil" with Sir Donald and the Oligarchy. We confess that we are wickedly enough inclined to give the *Islander* editor—whoever that occult genius is—further reason to make the allusion above cited, for we assure him we