

## The "Flatöbog."

AN ICELANDIC MS.



IN view of the prominence recently given to reports of this famous Danish history and its relation to the discovery of America, some information respecting the old-world MS. may be found acceptable.

This priceless book has a curious history. Its name is derived from Flato bogen, Flato's book, the whole being written in Icelandic. Its authors were two monks, Ion Pordarson and Magnus Porhallson, who wrote it for Ion Hakonsson. In the 17th

century it was in the hands of Ion Finsson, of Flatey, Breidarfirth (Iceland), but in the year 1662 it was brought to the royal library at Copenhagen, where it has since remained. Its contents are of the highest interest, and include a history of Norway and Iceland, an account of the colonisation of Greenland—the name remains as when first discovered—and reports of voyages from Greenland to America.

The part relative to the voyages to America, included in the first volume, takes up several pages of the book. There we find recounted various voyages made from Greenland by navigators to another country, more to the south and west. It speaks of the inhabitants visited, and their fear of a bull brought over by the travellers on their boat. Leif baptised the new country, and from its products he called it Vinland, or land of wine.

It is well demonstrated that these voyagers had, about the year 1000, discovered and frequented the American continent, and as this subject has become of the highest interest in America, the Danish Government consented to lend the "Flatöbog" to the United States during the period of the Chicago Exposition. It was arranged that the most minute precautions should be taken to ensure proper care of the MS. and its safe return. A war vessel of the United States navy was to transfer the book to New York, where a special military guard would receive it and take charge of it by rail to Chicago, and when once within the walls of the Exposition, it was to be guarded night and day. The United States Government offered to guarantee a sum of \$20,000 for its safe return, but even this was considered insufficient by the Danish officials. To take still further precautions, the entire MS. was photographed and reproduced by the best and most recent reproductive methods. To do this successfully and with safety, the most elaborate precautions were taken: each morning the book was escorted from the Royal Library to the Imperial studios, and each day it was returned to its place.

In spite of all these precautions, public opinion as manifested in Denmark and Norway was most strongly opposed to the transfer of the book to America, and

so strong was the protest that the Government was eventually compelled to withdraw its promise to the United States officials.

To compensate the exhibition committee in some degree, a photo-litho copy of the production was presented to them, and a special book has been made up of the parts relating to the discovery of America, reproduced by photo-lithography.

## The Post Office Report.

IF there was a fair division, every person in the United Kingdom received during the postal year ending March 31st, 46·6 letters and 6·4 postcards. The post office figures are beyond the mind's grasp. Letters numbered 1,790,500,000; postcards, 244,400,000; newspapers—which, strange to say, showed no increase—162,800,000; parcels, 52,370,000. Telegrams, like some of the boys who carry them, were stationary, and actually brought in £20,000 less than in the previous year. Absent-minded people are not yet extinct. They posted 32,000 letters without any addresses, and of these 1,955 contained cash or valuables worth in the aggregate over £5,000. But the most absent-minded person of all was he who wrote to "Jacob Stainer, Esq., violin maker, Absam, Germany," for his price list, and got the letter back, with an intimation that Mr. Stainer had been dead 200 years! There have been strange demands and cool requests. One postmaster was asked to give the address of "a widower gentleman, rather short, wears glasses, with one little boy two years of age." The postmaster couldn't. A clerk at Ventnor was desired to mind a lady's poodle while its owner went to church. The lady was very indignant at a refusal on the part of "a public servant." Savings Bank deposits were £4,245,077 better at the end of 1892 than of 1891, and the amount of Government stock purchased in the Savings Bank increased by £500,000. Over a million new accounts were opened during the year—a number never reached before. On the permanent staff of the post office there are 71,955 officers, of whom 10,465 are women. Altogether 131,459 people are employed.

## New Books or Old?

"NEW books or old?" I must confess  
Old books bring greatest happiness.  
I hate your modern poet's lay  
That finds no brightness in the day,  
But only darkness and distress.  
A fig for their conceitedness,  
Their songs in Penseroso dress!  
But yet again I hear you say,  
"New books or old?"

Come, give me Chaucer's pilgrims gay,  
My Spenser fair and fresh as May,  
Kit Marlowe's buxom shepherdess,  
And Shakspeare for all blessedness—  
Now need you ask for which I pray,  
"New books or old?"

—JAMES ERNEST BAKER.

A BOOKBINDER named Till, of Dover, was recently bitten by a rat, and died from hydrophobia of a tetanic character.