

since the Great Ice Age. The rivers, however, have carried down large quantities of gravel and sand with which they have silted up the heads of the firths, thus forming low plains which in their turn constitute the main portions of the irrigated and marshy meadows in Iceland.

In different parts of the country there may be found rhyolite formations, but their sporadic occurrence makes them of minor importance. Other kinds of rock than basalt and its varieties rarely occur, except the gabbro and granophyre formations, found in the neighbourhood of Hornafjörður in south-eastern Iceland. The crag formations in Tjörnes are, from a geological point of view, of great interest. The thickness of these strata attains in places some 700 metres.

The soil all over the country is pretty uniform as regards its chemical constitution, but it varies in appearance according as the place is high above or near the sea level. Close to the jökulls there is practically no soil, at least no organic matter worth speaking of; there is either the naked rock, terminal moraines, or sands, but no vegetation of any kind. As we come lower down, however, the vegetation gradually increases and the stratum of humus grows in thickness, so that in many places in the lowlands it is more than a metre deep. As the climate is rather chilly decomposition has played a rather insignificant part in shaping the surface features of the land, as compared with such adventitious matters as glacier detritus, volcanic ashes, and earth carried by the winds. These have settled in sheltered places, in hollows, in woody districts, and even on grassy plains, the depth of the soil therefore being greater here than elsewhere. On the other hand, where the wood has been laid waste or the sward broken up, the soil, when in a dry state, is apt to be blown away, as the matter composing it is loose and of light weight.

Where the soil is moist, bog plants grow, and in course of time *peat* is formed, which in some places has attained a thickness of from two to three or (rarely) even 10 metres. It is seldom found in a pure state, but with layers here and there of sand, of old volcanic ashes and clay carried to the bogs by the spring freshets. Yet peat is considerably used as fuel by the people.

CLIMATE

Iceland has an Oceanic Climate — that is, one of moderate heat and cold. Though the island is large, the differences in temperature between the coast and the interior are not very marked, and considering its high latitude, Iceland has, on the whole, a much higher