

temperature than might be expected. At Reykjavik the annual mean temperature is  $+ 4.1^{\circ}$  C. ( $39.4$  F.); the mean temperature in January, the coldest month of the year, is  $- 1.2^{\circ}$  C., while in July, the warmest month of the year, it is  $+ 10.9^{\circ}$  C. But the state of the weather is very unsettled, exhibiting not only sudden changes from day to day, but the same season may from year to year show great fluctuations in the weather conditions.

The warm current of The Gulf Stream which, as a rule, encircles the land, has a marked influence on the climate. But as Iceland is situated at the outer edge of the Gulf Stream, cold currents from the Polar basin occasionally touch its northern and, especially, its eastern coasts, imparting a great deal of chilliness to the weather. The Polar ice, too, has a considerable influence on the climate, for during the latter part of the winter and in spring it is always near the north-western coast of the land, and sometimes piled close against its shores. When this ice arrives in large masses or sheets, it blockades the harbours and considerably lowers the temperature. The floes are most frequently seen on the north, but sometimes also on the east coast, while on the southern shores and the west coast, farther south than the *Látrabjarg*, they hardly ever come. From September to December Polar ice is rarely seen near the Icelandic coasts.

As the country is very mountainous, there is rarely the same kind of weather all over it at one and the same time. Southerly winds are generally accompanied by precipitation in the south, by dry weather and warmth in the north. On the other hand, when the wind blows from the north there is fair weather in the south, but cold and precipitation in the north. In wintertime storms are frequent, and often rise to a gale of wind, whereas calm weather is rare. In the south the annual precipitation in the lowlands amounts to 1300 mm., while it is still heavier in the mountains, or about 2000 mm. The north is much drier, with an annual precipitation not exceeding 300—400 mm. Fogs are rather frequent on the eastern and (though in a less degree) on the northern shores, while the southern and, especially, the western coasts have but few foggy days a year. Thunderstorms are very rare.

#### FLORA

At the time of its colonization Iceland (i. e. the lowlands) was overgrown with birch wood, which by reckless waste and grazing, especially by sheep, was gradually reduced to such a degree that only scattered remnants were left here and there. But of late steps have been