

former are tried all kinds of cases, save those which are expressly excepted; in the latter are heard such cases as specially fall within their provinces.

The ordinary judicial court has two instances: the first instance is the lower court, presided over, in the country, by the district magistrate, in the town, by the town magistrate. The country is divided into 24 Lower Court Jurisdictions, i. e. 16 districts (*sýslur*) and 8 towns (*kaupstaðir*), whereas the lower court judges are but 21 in all. The second instance is the Supreme Court in Reykjavík, consisting of 3 judges.

As a general rule, the special judicial court has two instances, the supreme court being the higher instance. Some of the special courts consist of an ordinary lower court judge and lay judges, e. g. the Maritime Court, which tries cases dealing with legal questions arising out of shipping. Other special courts are organized on different lines. The most important of these is the High Court of the Realm, whose task it is to deliver judgment in first and last instance in cases brought against ministers for the discharge of their official duties. It comprises certain „ex-officio“ officials of the legal profession and members chosen by district and town councils, fifteen in all. A special court of appeal is the Ecclesiastical Court which consists of three members of the supreme court and two ecclesiastical members, and delivers judgment, in the last instance, in all cases over which it holds jurisdiction. Juries are never employed in the trial of criminal cases.

Before a civil lawsuit can be brought into a lower court, the general rule is that it must first be referred to a board of conciliation which mediates between the parties to the dispute. Sometimes the judge himself undertakes the mediation, but in the majority of cases the mediation is performed by the conciliation boards which are appointed for this purpose, and may also in minor debt cases decide a case by giving a ruling.

At the supreme court pleadings are oral; at the district courts (lower courts) the system of written procedure is used. Certain lawyers are authorized to plead in the supreme court. In the lower courts anybody may plead.

### GENERAL RIGHTS OF CITIZENS

The constitution contains a number of provisions intended to safeguard the subjects in the enjoyment of certain rights, and also a few clauses on their civic duties generally. Thus the constitution prescribes that there shall be freedom of the press; liberty to hold meetings; li-