

COMMUNICATIONS

ROADS AND BRIDGES

Up to the end of last century all transport in the interior of Iceland had to be done by pack-horses; carts were almost unknown in the country and the roads were mere bridlepaths. But in 1884 an expert in road making was engaged from Norway to teach the Icelanders how to make carriageable roads, and ten years later it was enacted by law, that carriage-ways should, at the expense of the State, be built from the chief towns into the country, and the administration of these matters placed in the hands of a civil engineer. From that date road making has progressed at a rapid pace and the grants voted for this purpose have increased every year.

According to the Roads Act, all roads are divided into the following four classes: 1) National Roads, i. e. main roads through and between districts, built and maintained entirely at the expense of the State. Of these Iceland now possesses some 2150 kilometres, whereof rather more than 1400 kilometres have already been made carriageable; 2) District Roads which, though built through and between districts where the traffic is greatest, are not national roads proper. They are constructed at the expense of the districts concerned, except in so far as they may be made carriageable, in which case grants from the State are allowed of up to one-half of costs. To those districts which levy a special roads tax on their inhabitants, according to a law of 1923, a part of their total expenses of road making is refunded by the State, and the higher the rate levied, the larger is the grant from treasury; 3) Parish Roads are those lying through and between parishes, and are neither national nor district roads; they are built at the expense of the parishes; 4) Mountain Roads are called such roads as are made across mountain tracts and upland regions, and do not belong to any of the three foregoing classes; they are mostly bridle-