THE LOCHS OF SHETLAND.

The Shetland Islands (see Index Map, Fig. 25) are very different in their physical features from the neighbouring group of the Orkneys. In place of the tame undulating surface of Orkney, the Shetlands, though not higher, are more rugged and more varied. High rocky ridges are separated by deep valleys, both running north and south. The more varied surface gives rise to a greater diversity in the lochs. Though many are very shallow, there is not the unvarying flat-bottomed character of the Orkney lochs, and some are relatively deep. In some parts of Shetland there are numerous lochs clustered together, as in North Uist, in other parts there are few lochs. Of the hundreds of lochs in the islands only thirty-one were surveyed. Though there are many basins in which there are numerous lochs, it never happened that we were able to survey more than two in the same basin, and in so many cases was there only one in the basin sounded that the thirty-one lochs surveyed occupy twenty-four separate basins. The area drained by all the lochs surveyed in the islands is just about 50 square miles, a very small proportion of the whole land surface. Only eighteen of the lochs have drainage areas of more than a square mile, eight drain more than 2 square miles, four drain more than 5 square miles, and the Loch of Cliff, with the most extensive drainage system in Shetland, drains an area of 8½ square miles. The combined superficial areas of all the lochs amount to no more than 4 square miles. The longest loch in Shetland, measured in a straight line between the extreme points, is Loch Strom, on the Mainland. Loch Strom has also the greatest superficial area, a little over half a square mile. The largest body of water is, however, Loch Girlsta, which, though inferior both in length and in area to the two lochs, Strom and Cliff, has nearly three times the volume of water of any other loch in Shetland. The volume of water contained in all the lochs of Shetland which were surveyed, amounts to about 1400 millions of cubic feet, which is but little over the volume of Loch Tummel alone, though that loch is scarcely longer than Loch Strom, or broader than Loch Spiggie.

The lochs of the Mainland of Shetland number probably some hundreds of various sizes. The great majority are insignificant in size, and there is no really large lake in the island. The largest is not 3 miles in length, the deepest is only 74 feet in maximum depth, and none has a superficial