

The inland waters which pass under the name of lakes are most numerous, as well as on the largest scale in the more northerly localities. There is a difference of nearly 17,000 feet between the highest lake, the Sir-i-kol, and the Dead Sea, the lowest. A system of lakes commences in Great Britain, extends through Norway and Sweden along the south coast of the Baltic, through Finland, North Russia, North Siberia to Behring's Strait. The areas of the most important are Sarinas in Finland, 1602 square miles; Wener in Sweden, 2136; Onega, 3280; and Ladoga, 6330, in Russia. A second system extends principally north of the mountain spine of the old world, and includes the Lakes of the Pyrenees, Alps, Apennines, Bavaria, Austrian Empire, Western and Central Asia.

The Caspian Sea, the largest lake in the world, belongs to this band, and has an area of 160,000 square miles,—nearly equal to the Kingdom of Spain; the second in point of extent, Lake Aral, has an area computed at 21,000; the third, Lake Baikal, 1793 feet above the sea, and 1200 miles in circumference. A third system comprises the great Canadian masses of fresh water, with their dependencies, which are continuous, connected by rivers: Lake Superior, 43,000 square miles,—nearly equal to England; Huron, 25,000; Michigan, 25,000; Erie, 11,000; Ontario, 10,000. The different level of these lakes marks the descent of the country, and the inclination of the uniting rivers. The surface of Lake Superior is 627 feet above the level of the sea; Huron and Michigan, 595 feet; Lake Erie, 565; Lake Ontario, 231. A fourth system, north-west of the former, extends from the Lake of the Woods to the icy shores of the Arctic Ocean, including Lake Winnipeg, area 9000 square miles; Athabaska, 3000; Great Slave Lake, 12,000; and Great Bear Lake, 8000.

Independent of these systems there are a vast number of lakes in Northern, Central, and Southern America; some of very considerable extent in Africa, others in China, as the celebrated Mer des Etoiles, the mysterious sources of the Hoango. The water of these lakes is obtained from rivers running into them, or from internal springs.

The Caspian Sea has several shallows, but at one place in the middle no bottom has been found at 2800 feet; Maggiore, 2625; Lake Ontario, the general depth varies from 15 to 500 feet, but in the middle it exceeds 500. The depths of other lakes vary from 66 to 2700.