pound capacity and one of 100,000 pound capacity, suitable for testing beams and other structures used in buildings. These machines will test beams up to twenty feet in length and are equipped to make tests of the different materials used in construction work. Three of these machines used in the beam division are shown in Fig. 1.

In addition to the above machines a very large machine, having a working capacity of 600,000 pounds, will in a few weeks be installed at the laboratories at St. Louis. As far as known at this time there is only one other machine in the United States similar to this. This machine will make it possible to test columns, beams, and, in fact, all the different kinds of construction material now used. It will test very large reinforced concrete girders up to spans thirty feet in length and concrete columns up to thirty feet in length.

The value of such tests as these is readily apparent, since their results can be applied directly to practical work. A very serious objection to the use of results obtained in tests made by private investigators is due to the fact that the tests were applied only to small specimens not nearly approaching in size the parts or pieces used in actual construction. Heretofore it has been necessary to consult the results of these small tests in order to have some basis for design, but it is now clearly recognized that the best results can be obtained only

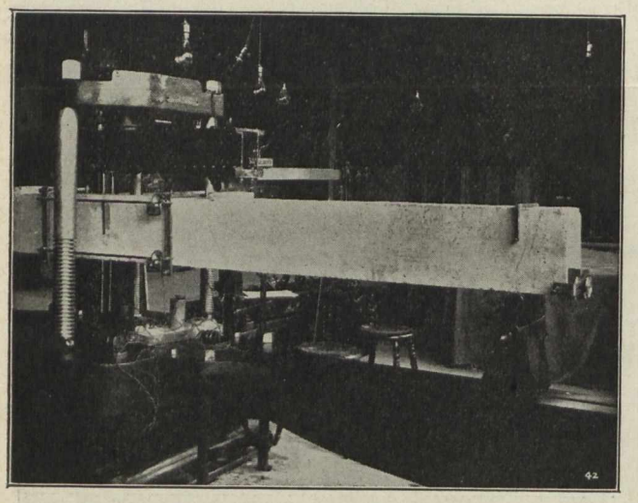

Fig. No. 2.—Testing a Thirteen-foot Concrete Beam.

from tests made on members as large as possible, or at least on pieces as large as those ordinarily used in structural work.

All the concrete used at the laboratories is mixed in three Chicago cube concrete mixers, each of which is mounted on skids, geared to a motor and equipped with charging hopper. One of these mixers has a capacity of one cubic yard, and the others will contain one-third cubic yard each. After the concrete is mixed it is carefully tamped in moulds to form the different pieces on which the tests are made, such as cylinders, cubes, and beams.

The laboratory also uses five hollow concrete block machines, used for making concrete blocks similar to those used in actual construction, and the several different divisions,—the constituent materials division, the beam division, the concrete block division, the permeability, the shear and tension and the chemical division are equipped with all apparatus necessary for conducting their tests.

Although reinforced concrete is used to a remarkable extent at the present time, and both concrete and reinforced concrete construction is becoming more and more popular every day, it is evident to any one familiar with construction work that these materials will be more generally employed within the next few years. Many engineers are prejudiced against the use of concrete and reinforced concrete, but this prejudice is rapidly being removed by the obtainment and publication of reliable data regarding this material. Without doubt, in a very few years, when most of the principles underlying the use of concrete and reinforced concrete have been fully established from tests and investigations, there will be little prejudice against the use of concrete; the present prejudice evidently being due to lack of information.

The longest beam thus far tested in the beam division has been thirteen feet in length. Beams of this length tested are made without steel, that is, of solid concrete beams, and also with varying proportions of steel, ranging from very small percentages up to three per cent. A full size beam in the testing machine is shown in Fig. 2; the load is applied at the top of the beam at points four feet from each end. The men conducting the tests watch the beam very closely while it is in the testing machine, and examine its surfaces with magnifying glasses in order to locate the fine cracks as they appear. In the beginning a load of about 5,000 pounds is applied and the machine is stopped with this load on the beam. After the observers have examined the beam carefully and made a record of the cracks appearing at that time, the load is increased, and after every 1,000 pounds additional the beam is again examined until the maximum load is applied.

In a very large number of tests the beam shows no cracks that are visible to the eye until the maximum load is reached, when the steel reaches its elastic limit and begins to stretch fast, this result ending the test. The cracks that appeared on the beam and the loads at which these cracks appeared are recorded by photographs.

In beginning tests of reinforced concrete simple round rods were used, as it was thought that more uniform results could thus be had than if any of the patented systems were used. After a complete series of tests with the round rods has been made, it is proposed to take up tests of the different forms of bars that are used in practical work, and the results will be published from time to time by the Geological Survey. Tests will be made of beams ranging from six to twelve feet in length, and because of longer span will be tested later, if necessary, in order to get results that can be applied to almost all practical conditions.

The concrete used in the different beams tested, as described above, is moulded into cylinders and cubes, which are tested in order to get the direct strength of the concrete. These cylinders and cubes are all tested at different ages, generally at ages of 7, 28, 90, 180, and 360 days. The cement, sand, stone, gravel, or other material composing the concrete is carefully proportioned by weight, the correct percentage of water is used and the whole mass is placed in a mixer and thoroughly mixed. It is then deposited very carefully in moulds or forms, which, after twenty-four hours, are removed. The concrete is then moved into a storage room, and is there sprinkled with water three times each day. Each test piece is numbered on a card index, which tells where information relating to the test pieces can be found and also indicates the dates on which the different pieces are to be tested.

A branch of the work that should be of interest to everybody, especially the small home-builder, is the investigation of cement building blocks. Many houses are now built of cement blocks in preference to wood, because generally cement block construction is cheaper and better than wood, since it is fireproof, more durable and less expensive to maintain. The exterior surfaces of wooden buildings must be painted, and clap-boards must be added from time to time; but when the cement block building is finished, the surface is there once for all; no further treatment, no repairs, no maintenance are necessary.

All the cement blocks used in these investigations are mixed in concrete block machines. The concrete is mixed in a one-third cubic yard cubical concrete mixer and deposited on the floor of the testing room. It is then shoveled into the hollow block machines and compacted very firmly in the forms. Varying proportions of concrete, sand, and stone are used in order to determine the relative value and economy of using different mixtures. Some blocks are made of wet concrete, others of concrete very dry, and still others of concrete having a consistency medium between wet and dry. In actual practice, concrete blocks made from comparatively dry concrete is usually preferred by the manufacturers, for these blocks harden quickly and the forms may be removed almost as soon as all the concrete is placed in the machine. By this practice it is possible to use the same machine for making a large number of blocks each day, whereas when wet concrete is used, the blocks must remain in the machine for a much