

STREAM MEASUREMENT AND WATER POWER.

One of the departments of the work of the United States Geological Survey which has a particularly practical bearing on manufacturing and other business interests is the accurate measurement of flow of the country's streams. Its utility lies in the fact that it reduces to a matter of actual knowledge the amount of water passing through them at all seasons of the year, which important factor has probably been the subject of more guess work than any other one thing in this branch of engineering. More especially is this true of the low water stages on which really depend the effective worth of the streams, so that many mills and factories which have been built in expectation of being operated entirely by water power, have had to be furnished with auxiliary steam power to help out in times of a deficient and unexpectedly low water supply. Perhaps this is the chief reason, this general distrust of the reliability of the estimates of flow, that the really magnificent power possibilities of many streams, both in the eastern and western mountain sections of the country, have not been more fully developed. The trouble has not been that the streams cannot be relied upon to furnish power, but that the power which can reasonably be expected of them has been over estimated. The accurate gaging of streams requires much time and skilled knowledge. It involves daily observation of their rise and fall, extending over a number of years, frequent measurements of their flow by delicate instruments, and careful observations of diversions by dams or power plants already in operation. When applied to the whole country this work becomes of such wide scope as to be beyond the efforts of any but the general Government, and, as a matter of fact, few of the states, to say nothing of individuals, have made any systematic effort to undertake it. The Survey has taken up and developed this work because it needed to be done and no one was doing it, and now has a large number of stations scattered among many of the important rivers of the country. On these rivers information is being collected which will be absolutely necessary to further developments of their power. Since the improvement in the transmission of electricity to long distances, water power streams have assumed a new value and will be more and more sought as means of cheap power. This gives to the work of the Survey in its river gagings and measurements an even greater importance and necessity as furnishing indispensable information which can be obtained from no other source.

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