

of the river clear, the bucket-dredge "Erskine" has been berthed at the wharf every night. In consequence of these limitations upon the dredging, including the hours worked, the amount of useful work done during the year has been comparatively small, and the best results have not been obtained from the plant. It has been the practice when the dredges were unable to work to employ the crew upon painting and repairs. No attempt has been made by the Board to increase the efficiency of the plant by working longer hours when weather permitted, or by night shifts, or by suiting the tidal conditions.

"RUBI SEDDON."

51. In 1902 the Board sought the assistance of the Government towards the procurement of a dredge, and following thereupon financial arrangements were made by which the dredge was obtained through the agency of the Railway Department, who, it was understood, should in turn utilize the services of the Agent-General and the Consulting Engineers to the Government in Great Britain. The Board supplied a skeleton specification for the dredge in which it was stated, *inter alia*, that the dredge would be required to deal with sand and silt, and rough shingle, including stones 3 in. to 10 in. in diameter. This specification was shortly afterwards superseded by another containing the same provisions, but adding an additional one to the effect that the dredge should be similar to the "Antleon" recently built by Messrs. Simons and Co. (Limited), of Renfrew, Scotland, for the New South Wales Government, and the Board asked at the same time that the dredge should be ordered from that firm. The Minister of Railways sent this specification forward to the Agent-General with instructions to obtain a quotation from that firm, and in fact no other firm could be expected to tender, as the specification required a line drawing of the "Antleon" to be supplied. Incidentally we mention that another firm desired to tender, but was not given the opportunity to do so. Messrs. Simons appended their own specification in detail to their tender, and also referred to the "attached specification," which it is understood was that handed to them by the Agent-General. The tenders mentioned several prices for different ports of delivery and times of payment. These particulars were cabled by the Agent-General to the Railway Department, with the result that the Board authorized the acceptance of the highest-priced tender, amounting to £25,750, delivered in Wellington, where full payment was to be made. Before accepting that tender the Agent-General, by agreement with the contractors, secured a reduction in price to £25,000. On the arrival of the detailed British specification in New Zealand the Board discovered and pointed out that the dredge was apparently designed to work at moorings, and not under way as the makers' descriptive pamphlet described the "Antleon" to do. The Consulting Engineers to the Government took immediate steps upon this discovery to have rectified the result of this misunderstanding, but they pointed out that the drawings and specifications of the "Antleon" as submitted to them by the makers did not describe a dredge to work under way, but at moorings.

When the dredge was finished she was tested on the Clyde in the presence of a representative of the Consulting Engineers, who passed the dredge as being in compliance with the specification; but it does not appear that the capacity of the dredge to lift stones of 10 in. diameter was tested on that occasion. The dredge arrived at Wellington in November, 1903, with her hull in a damaged condition through grounding in the Gulf of Suez on the voyage out. The Board specially authorized the Railway Department to act as their agent in taking over the dredge, and in virtue of this authority the Railway Department agreed with the representative of the makers upon the extent of the necessary repairs, which were thereupon carried out in Wellington without cost to the Board. The Chief Mechanical Engineer to the Railway Department, acting as agent for the Board, intimated in writing that he was "prepared to accept the dredger as complete and in accordance with the original contract made by the Agent-General with Messrs. Simons." No further test was made in Wellington before its acceptance to ascertain whether the dredge complied with the particular requirement of the Board as to the raising of stones up to a diameter of 10 in. The dredge was taken over by the Railway Department on the 3rd February, 1904.

On the arrival of the dredge at Westport it was found that it would not lift stones larger than 5 in. in diameter. Upon this defect being represented to the