

GETTING OUT THE STONE.

time of the old local government of South Canterbury (the S. C. Board of Works), is still to the fore. Not long ago an eminent naval authority wired from the Bluff "Is it possible to berth my ship comfortably?" the said ship being an 800 ton sloop. A more serious instance is the story of a careful owner who, hearing in some benighted quarter that Timaru was hardly safe, declined to permit his barque of 750 tons to go there to take up a wheat cargo which he had secured for that extensive craft. This wonderful decision was made at the very moment when three steamers of an aggregate tonnage of 25,000 tons—one of them the Athenic of twelve thousand aforesaid—were lying at the wharves; to say nothing of a fleet of smaller craft in the basin.

But these are pinpricks, merely. South Canterbury has the most solid ground of satisfaction with the harbour wrenched from the sea. It is not only that the biggest of ships come there. The great fact is that their presence means a striking financial success for the district. In 1899 the Board measured that success clearly:—

"The dead weight of cargo handled at the port of Timaru since and including 1883, the date of the first loan, up to 31st December, 1898, has been 1,243,415 tons. The cost of railing this cargo to Lyttelton at say 15s. per ton would have been £932,561, or, in other words, the district has been benefited by the Harbour Works to the extent of £883,597, since 1883, an amount which exceeds very greatly the whole cost of the Harbour Works, with the harbour rate included. The saving to the district for the current year will not be less than £70,000. If there were no harbour to compete with the railway, the railway rates would be for merchandise, according to class 27/6, 34/7, 42/10, 51/4, per ton, grain 11/11, wool 13/3 for a double dump, timber 3/3 per hundred feet super, coal 10/5 and 13/4 per ton, so that it will readily be seen that the actual loss to the district if the harbour were closed, would be very much greater than the present saving as stated above. The coastal trade is very large in addition."

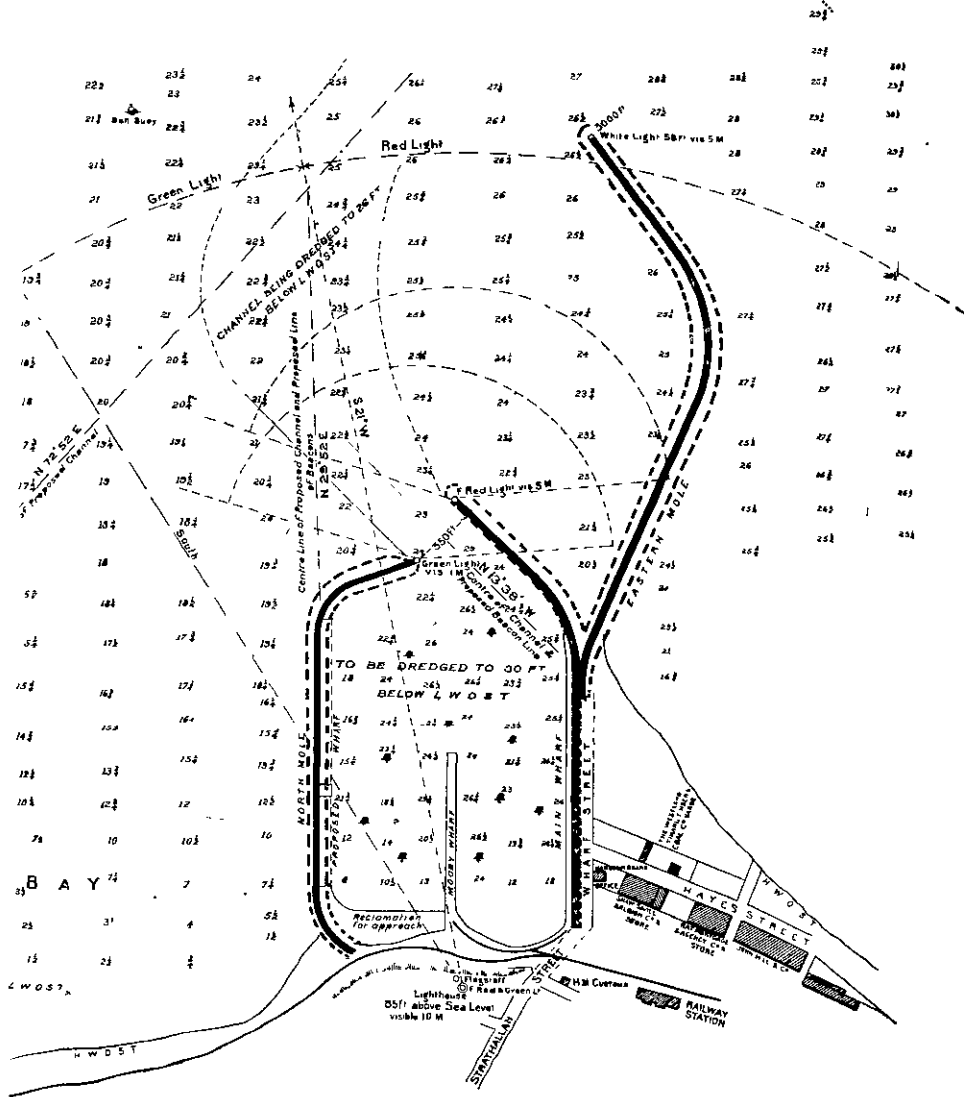
Since these words were penned there has been a great development in Timaru. The exports, foreign and intercolonial, went from £475,000 in 1895, to £1,042,000 in 1905

and the imports rose from £75,000 to £227,000. With these figures of value as a guide to the tonnage handled, it is a safe surmise that the £883,000 of profit shown in 1898, has grown to something like a million and a half by the present date. On the other hand the harbour which has saved the country that large amount has not cost half a million all told. A whole million sterling has, in consequence of the harbour, remained in the

pockets of the producers of South Canterbury as clear gain, after paying for their famous breakwater. They can afford to laugh at the ancient sneer at their "Bill of Rights," as the proposed breakwater used to be termed in old days. As time goes on, these gains will increase, for the days of close settlement are come in South Canterbury, and the productiveness of the fine soil of the country may be relied on to largely increase the tonnage handled by the harbour people, with corresponding increase to the profits of the producers. At the same time the energy, sagacity and courage of the past are guarantees that whatever devices the ocean may, in the future, develop against the southern breakwater, they will be met and conquered in the best manner, for which the large and increasing producing power of the district will assuredly supply the means.

## Asbestos.

Taking into consideration the fact that asbestos is absolutely as "old as the hills," it seems almost incredible—when one glances around at this twentieth century world of ours, with its numerous signs of discovery and progress in all directions, its scientific wonders, and ingenuity so conspicuously stamped on everything—that this particular mineral should remain so little understood and practically unknown outside expert circles. Yet that is the case, unfortunately for the public at large, who, it is obvious from reports of the all too many disastrous fires we so frequently read, are sometimes called upon to pay the penalty for their ignorance—or neglect?—with their lives. Undoubtedly many individual lives that have been thus awfully lost, and probably more than half of the buildings, might have been spared to the world were this great natural fire-fighter, asbestos, only more generally in use and universally adopted.



TOWN OF TIMARU

PLAN OF THE HARBOUR WITH SOUNDINGS.