from Cumberland to Wheeling, and it has been so graded, except at a few points, (some of which will be mentioned more particularly hereafter) where it was necessary to contract the width in order to save time in making it ready for the rails.

The Masonry is of the best kind, and the superstructures of the bridges of the most improved form, choicest materials, (chiefly iron) and excellent manufacture.

The Railway Track consists of a T rail of 58 lbs. per yard, with wrought iron chairs, spiked upon cross-ties two feet apart, and bedded in 2 feet of broken stone or gravel ballast.

The Water Houses are mostly of stone or brick, with capacious tanks and the best kind of valves and discharge pipes. Those of them which are not fed by the natural flow of water, are supplied by pumps worked by steam power; and at the western end of the line the water is stored during the dry season, in large reservoir dams, which will be further assisted by wells where necessary.

The Engine Houses, Station Buildings, and Shops are designed to be of the most capacious and permanent character; but up to this time the only points at which the buildings erected are in this style is at Piedmont and (in part) at Wheeling. The buildings at those points are described in my last annual report, and I have only to add that those at Piedmont are completed and occupied, while at Wheeling the inner station buildings are also finished and in use, except the engine and car house on the south side of Wheeling Creek (not begun,) and the passenger house which, extending over the bridge, cannot be used till the latter is finished, which it will be in a few weeks. The engine houses and shops at Wheeling have been, for want of time to erect the permanent improvements at the outer station, temporarily put up, of frame, upon a lot leased for the purpose. The accommodation at this point is insufficient, and the outer station buildings will be required as soon as they can be erected. The delay may not have been prejudicial, as it has given further time to perfect the plan and arrangement of the buildings.

At Cranberry Summit, Cheat river, Simpson's, Fetterman, Burton and Cameron, there are engine houses of various sizes, and which, although of frame, are well built and will answer their purposes well.

Before leaving the subject of station buildings, I will say that at the Parkersburg junction, a point of prominent importance upon the road, a system of buildings for the joint accommodation of both roads uniting at that point, is being planned and the execution of part of it, needed for the accommodation of the North-Western Virginia Rail Road has been commenced.

I may repeat of the plans of the work, that in all their details they were framed with an eye to the full accomplishment of the objects of a great Road like this, and that they have been thus executed with inconsiderable exceptions, which press of time in opening the Road rendered unavoidable. These exceptions will be mentionen more particularly under another head.

Of the Progress and Completion of the Work.

A short review of the circumstances under which the work has been carried on from its commencement to its opening to Wheeling will be of interest, and throw light upon the important subject of its cost, to be afterwards spoken of.

In 1849 the Road from Cumberland to Fetterman, 103 miles, was placed under contract in three successive lettings. In June, 1850, 65 additional miles, and in December of the same year the remaining 33 miles at the Wheeling end were contracted for,—making up the 201 miles of the Road. During the first year labor was superabundant, and although the mountain section of the route was difficult of access for men and material, the competition for the work among contractors was eager and the prices at which it was let were consequently low. The sparce native population, and the numerous body of foreigners introduced among them, with their old country feuds and their intemperate habits, made necessary the early establishment of an armed police; and in the fall of 1850, when the extension of the work on this and other lines carried the demand for labor beyond the supply, it became requisite to strengthen the police for the protection of the new hands, whose introduction upon the line was violently resisted by the factions then in possession. Upwards of 2,500 men were brought from New York in the winter of 1850-51, and distributed among the several contracts as far West as Cheat River, 75 miles from Cumberland; and although every proper inducement was offered to retain them, more than half soon dispersed. Enough, however, were left to accomplish the intended object of forwarding the difficult sections so as to permit the opening of the Road to the several intermediate points of importance, at periods but little behind at times promised. The results of the measure were well worth the expense, which was much heavier than had been expected, in consequence of the absconding laborers to reimburse the cost of their transportation to the work. Had all remained and proved effective hands, the work would however have been sooner and more completely done, and many costly expedients for getting the track over breaks in road-bed might have been avoided. The price of labor would have been kept down, and the number of failures on the part of contractors diminished. These failures, as stated in my last Annual Report, made it necessary to provide anew for the construction of no less than 88 sections out of 200, and 28 bridges out of 114. Most of the abandoned sections were never begun by the bidders to whom they were first awarded, and several of them were re-let two or three times before their completion, and each time at an advance of price. The Company was itself compelled to undertake and complete 9 of the most difficult sections, and 8 of the bridges, including the 5 of greatest magnitude on the line. The work was more faithfully and substantially executed than if done by contract, but its