

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT.

THE Missouri River has long been known as so turbulent and unstable a stream, that it was considered by many of those best acquainted with its character, as almost incapable of being bridged. The successful completion of the first bridge across this river, and the novelty of some of the methods adopted for putting down its foundations, especially that introduced at Pier No. 4, which is believed to be capable of considerable extension in similar works, have therefore excited such general attention and inquiry, as to make it seem desirable that some record should be published of its construction.

It is admitted that many of the plans were very different from those which, in the light of present experience, it would be wished to adopt; but it is believed that a narrative of the difficulties and temporary failures on this pioneer work, may prove more interesting and instructive than would be the account of the more matured plans of a second undertaking.

The movement which led ultimately to the building of the Kansas City bridge, dates from the incorporation of the "Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior Railroad" by the State of Missouri, in 1857. This high-sounding title, and the extent of the enterprise, which contemplated some 1,500 miles of railroad, occasioned a great deal of merriment in the Legislature, especially as but 129 miles of the scheme lay in Missouri, within the jurisdiction of the body granting the charter, and it was also understood that the projectors would, for the present, be satisfied with the building of 52 miles of the line, as a branch of another railroad.

But the enterprising citizens of the then infant City of Kansas, which perhaps contained at that time some 2,000 inhabitants, proved wiser than those who laughed at their plans, and they now have the satisfaction of seeing sub-