

HOUSE No. 459.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, June 14, 1886.

The Committee on Military Affairs have the honor to report that, in accordance with the provisions of section 89 of chapter 14 of the Public Statutes, they visited the State arsenal and camp ground at South Framingham on Monday, May 24th, and submit the following report:—

Your committee, accompanied by the Adjutant-General, proceeded to make a thorough inspection of the arsenal, storehouse, magazine and target grounds, which were found to be in excellent condition, as well as the arrangements for the care of State property consisting of arms, equipments, clothing, tents, etc.

The accommodations for storing are ample and systematically arranged, reflecting credit upon Mr. Landy, the superintendent, who is untiring in his efforts to have a place for everything and everything in its place.

The method of keeping his accounts, showing the amount of property on hand, manner of disbursement and accountability therefor, is highly commendable.

On visiting the target grounds, where a range of three hundred yards is obtained, we found everything in good condition. There are ten first class iron targets, with a bullet-proof gallery about two hundred and seventy-five feet long, furnished with every appliance for safety, convenience and the facilitating of practice.

This important branch of instruction is being imparted to the militia, who are making encouraging progress in its practice.

The permanent wooden structures which were erected in 1884, consisting of brigade headquarters, guard house at the main entrance, stables, cook-houses and sanitariums for each organization, were found to be in good condition, adding very much to the appearance, as well as to the comfort and health of the troops when in camp, also a great saving in expenditure for tents and repairs.

Your committee commend the policy of superseding tents by permanent structures when possible, believing it to be directly in the line of economy and health.

Improvements have been made the present year by moving the cook-houses one hundred and forty feet to the rear, giving additional room for the movements of troops.

A new building is being erected as headquarters for His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, and a neat one-story structure for a hospital.

These improvements have been inaugurated and perfected since the administration of Adjutant-General Dalton, by funds realized from the sale of condemned property, without any extra appropriation.

Your committee were next conducted to the target grounds, to inspect and witness the working of one of the four Gatling guns which the State has recently received from the General Government.

A detail of sixteen men from Battery B of Worcester, under command of Captain Wellington and Lieutenant Merrill, were in charge, and showed commendable proficiency in handling the new weapon of destruction. The result of their practice was quite satisfactory, demonstrating its terrible destructive powers when handled by experts. An exhibition of the rapidity and accuracy with which it could be fired was shown by firing one hundred shots at a target at two hundred yards, taking just six seconds, nearly every shot striking the target and scoring an average of centres. One of the party voiced his impressions of its destructive powers by remarking that an army against which it should be used might do away with its ambulance corps, substituting therefor a corps of undertakers.

The committee next visited Fort Dalton, a substantial

earthwork, complete in all its details, with magazine, two ten-inch barbette guns and four mortars.

Here a detachment from Co. G., 1st Infantry, M. V. M., under command of Lieutenant Fox, gave an exhibition in handling the guns and mortar firing.

The proficiency shown by these detachments from two branches of our State military service was very gratifying.

Your committee congratulate the Commonwealth upon the efficiency of the Adjutant-General's department, and the economy with which its affairs are administered, and for its well equipped and disciplined militia.

CHARLES L. DODGE.

For the Committee.

