ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF VISITORS

TO THE

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY,

MADE TO

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

FOR

THE YEAR 1881.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1881.

BOARD OF VISITORS, JUNE, 1881.

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

1. General GEORGE S. GREENE (*President*) ..... Rhode Island.
2. Hon. C. A. BOUTELLE (*Secretary*) ..... Maine.
3. General MILO S. HASCALL ..... Indiana.
4. HENRY B. LEDYARD ..... Michigan.
5. Dr. S. S. LAWS ..... Missouri.
6. General DON CARLOS BUELL ..... Kentucky.
7. General A. STAGER ..... Illinois.

APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

8. Hon. JUSTIN S. MORRILL ..... Vermont.
9. Hon. GEORGE H. PENDLETON ..... Ohio.

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

10. Hon. ALFRED M. SCALES * ..... North Carolina.
11. Hon. PHILIP COOK ..... Georgia.
12. Hon. CHARLES G. WILLIAMS ..... Wisconsin.

* Not present.

REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF VISITORS TO THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT, JUNE, 1881.

WEST POINT, N. Y., *June*, 1881.

SIR: The Board of Visitors appointed by the President to visit the Military Academy at the June examinations of 1881 have the honor to submit the following report:

All the members of the Board were present during the greater part of the examination; some of them, as suggested in your letter of appointment arrived prior to the examination and remained till after its close. The Superintendent and the professors and officers under his command offered us every facility for inspecting the Academy in all its branches and for witnessing the examinations and drills; they also furnished freely all information asked for, verbally and in writing, as desired.

The law authorizing the appointment of a Board of Visitors requires those members of it who are appointed by the President to submit to the Secretary of War for the information of Congress a report in regard to the administration, discipline, instruction, fiscal affairs, and other concerns of the Academy. We therefore report under these various heads, as follows:

1.—ADMINISTRATION.

In regard to the general administration of the Academy, we find the following facts to exist: The Revised Statutes, sections 1310, 1314, 1334, provide that the Superintendent of the Military Academy shall have the rank of colonel of Engineers. In fact, however, the command at West Point constitutes a military department, of which the Military Academy is a portion, and the commanding general is the Superintendent of the Academy.

We are not aware that the law above quoted has been repealed, but we do not find it enforced; the rank and positions of other officers of the Military Academy are, we believe, in accordance with law. The assistant adjutant general of the military department does not belong to the Military Academy organization, and is in no way essential to it. This officer occupies quarters required by the academic officers, there being not enough quarters for the proper accommodation of the academic staff on duty there.

A period of more than four years seems to us necessary to enable the Superintendent to acquire a perfect knowledge of the interests of the Academy and of the best method of discharging his duties. Familiarity with the service in the Army is only a very partial preparation for the duties of the Superintendent of the Military Academy. The command is peculiar and unlike those in the Army, and its duties are

entirely different. None but a graduate can successfully exercise this command, because none but a graduate can be thoroughly familiar with the details of its organization, its discipline, and its system of instruction. The professors of the Academy are permanent officers, as they always have been and always should be. This is the universal rule in all institutions of learning, and its advantages are too well known to require recapitulation here. With the assistant professors the case is different. Were they permanently detached they would be debarred from the hope of promotion, and the most useful would seek other positions.

By the present system of temporarily detailing graduates distinguished in study a large class of officers is brought to the intimate acquaintance of the academic board, and their utility as teachers is fully tested, thus enabling the board to make judicious selections for detail, and when a vacancy occurs to recommend a thoroughly qualified candidate for a professorship.

Suggestions have been made that there would be an advantage in making appointments of professors from other institutions. Experience does not justify the utility of this suggestion, nor is it practiced, except to a very limited extent, in the old and most renowned institutions of the country. The great success of the Academy at West Point under the peculiar method of instruction justifies the conclusion that the professors should be as far as possible graduates of the Academy, an intimate knowledge of its plan and practice being essential to their usefulness. The instructors in practical military engineering and in ordnance and gunnery, as well as the commandant of cadets, being at the head of their respective departments of instruction, and in the line of the special duties of their profession, may be detached with advantage for a longer period than four years, and we recommend that they be not subject to the four years' term of detail.

In general, we find the officers earnest and attentive to their duties, and we are of opinion that there has never been at the Academy a more competent academic board than at present.

2.—Discipline.

The late General Sylvanus Thayer, who may justly be considered the father of the Military Academy, inaugurated the system of discipline in teaching justly termed the West Point system. No person ever worked with more singleness of purpose, with more intelligence, energy, and devotion to his special duty than the then Major Thayer, who for sixteen years was Superintendent of the Academy. Although he was not fully supported by the superior authorities, as the superintendents now are, in the enforcement of rigid discipline, yet he persevered, and in spite of many adverse circumstances succeeded in establishing the system which has brought the Military Academy to great perfection and usefulness, and which has received the commendation of all who have investigated it.

The necessarily rigid discipline of the cadets seems to be preserved. Various attempts have formerly been made to propitiate the cadets by indulgences and by relaxation of the traditional requirements of duty, and always with disastrous effects. One great evil of the change of Superintendent once in four years has been that the new incumbent, with a laudable desire to distinguish himself by improving the discipline, inaugurates a system of amelioration by indulgences, by which he hopes to avoid the severity of the exactions in the performance of duty. These

attempts have uniformly been singular failures, filling the barrack yard with extra-duty men and crowding the demerit reports. The return to the traditional system has been painful to the authorities and vexatious to the cadets. No persons know better than the cadets themselves that the rigid performance of all duties required by the regulations and orders is beneficial to themselves and to the best interests of the service, preventing the vicious and idle from interrupting the performance of duty by the more faithful and earnest.

The penalties for violation of the regulations of the Academy are mild and calculated to stimulate the well-disposed student to renewed exertions and not to break the manly spirit of independence. When the demerits are excessive in number, or breaches of discipline gross, the regulations require dismissal; which, for the best interests of the service and of the Academy, should be irrevocable whenever imposed. Imprisonment does not seem to be compatible with the high character which the cadets should maintain, and whenever that may be necessary it should be followed by dismissal.

The malpractice of "hazing," which had made its appearance a few years since at the government academies, has been curbed by rigid discipline, but it still lingers to some extent, and it will require the utmost vigilance on the part of the officers in immediate charge of the cadets, and the most prompt measures in punishment, in order to eradicate this vicious and unmanly practice.

The practice of treating the new students as of an inferior order by the higher classes is probably as old as the formation of colleges. Anciently the senior had his freshman who performed menial service for him, and "hazing" was probably the result of a rebellion against this service. It is not a peculiar outgrowth of the Military Academy, but an imported practice in violation of good order and discipline.

The bearing of the cadets in ranks, in the section room, and off duty, is soldierlike and becoming, and their behavior at the mess table and in other personal intercourse is decorous and manly.

We are of opinion that no one should be quartered in the cadet barracks but the cadets, the tactical officers and soldiers and servants who are under the immediate command of the commandant of cadets. We deem this an arrangement essential to the proper discipline and practice of the cadet barracks. The dentist should be established in some other building, and the officers not connected with the tactical department should be provided with quarters elsewhere.

It was not an unimportant feature of the West Point system as originally established to endeavor to bring about as frequent intercourse as possible between the officers and cadets. To aid this it was the custom for the Superintendent in person to grant all permits for supplies, thus bringing each individual cadet frequently into his presence, and making him familiar with his necessities and wants. This duty is now performed by the officer issuing the supplies. We think that the issuing officer should not be charged with the duty of controlling the amount of supplies the cadet shall receive. The cadet being supplied with sufficient funds for his support by the government, should not be allowed to receive money from any other source, excepting for his outfit on entering the Academy and expenses when on furlough or leave, and he should not be allowed to be in debt except in cases of unavoidable necessity. Economy, which will be so essential to him in the Army, should be carefully enforced at the Academy.

Cadets whose parents or guardians are of a different religious belief from that of the chaplain of the Academy have been allowed to attend

the services of other churches at West Point or in the vicinity, at the request of their parents or guardians; we think that this privilege should not be curtailed, but that the cadets should be allowed the fullest liberty in this respect consistent with proper discipline.

3.—Instruction.

We attended the examination in mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, mineralogy, geology, civil and military engineering, and ground tactics, ordnance, gunnery, French, Spanish, law and English studies, and the exhibition of drawings. Some members of the Board also witnessed the ordinary recitations in the section rooms before the close of the term.

The West Point system of instruction, which consists in dividing the class into small sections, each under an instructor, and the whole under the professor, and in subjecting each cadet to a daily examination, has, in a long course of years, proved to be admirably adapted to its purpose, and has our unqualified approval. The cadets, as was to be expected, showed commendable efficiency in the various branches of study.

The condition of the department of chemistry and mineralogy, from which the former professor has lately been retired at his own request, after a close application to the duties of his department for more than twenty-three years, is a monument of devotion to duty and of intelligent and successful teaching.

The departments of French and Spanish, in accordance with the provisions of a law recently passed, are to be merged into one, as soon as a vacancy occurs in the professorship of either. The opinion of Congress having thus been clearly expressed as to the necessity for only one professor for these two studies, we recommend that the law be put into practical operation by the retirement of the professor of Spanish whenever of the requisite age. This retirement will not only consolidate the two departments, but will make available a set of quarters greatly needed for other academic officers.

In the department of drawing, the present professor has remodeled the method of instruction, and the cadets are instructed in those subjects most necessary and useful for their positions in the Army; but little time is devoted to purely artistic work, and that only for cadets who have special aptitude for it.

The scientific departments maintain under the present professors the high reputation which they acquired from the unremitting labors of Davies, Mahan, Bartlet, and Church.

The exhibitions in the various infantry and artillery drills showed a very commendable proficiency in all these branches. The ponton-bridge drill was well executed, but we observed that all the ponton train was worn out, and to a few boats and bridge materials. This most important branch of practical instruction should be provided with a new and complete ponton train.

The cavalry maneuvers were executed with great spirit, the cadets having a good seat and confident bearing in the saddle. In the cavalry school the horseback gymnastic riding, mounting and dismounting in pairs on running horses, showed great perfection in horsemanship. We learn that the latter exercise is criticised as being too rough and liable to accident. We hope that instruction so useful in making a trooper master of his horse, so admirably adapted to promote physical development, and so useful at times in Indian and other warfare, will not be omitted for any slight reasons. We think the instructor has done signal service in bringing this branch to its present creditable condition.

There was no exhibition of exercises in the gymnasium, nor of the broadsword in single combat. There is a great deficiency of apparatus for the fencing school, and the whole furnishing of the gymnasium is unsatisfactory. A more suitable room is needed for this purpose. The regulations of the Academy (paragraph 26) require that "instruction shall be given in the use of the small-sword, broad-sword, and bayonet, and such military gymnastics, including swimming, as circumstances may permit." In fact, however, we find that no instruction whatever is given in swimming, but very little in gymnastics, and the exhibitions of fencing and bayonet exercises were spiritless and unsatisfactory. The value of this class of exercises for men whose profession requires good physical development cannot be doubted, and the winter afternoons, when snow prevents out-door drills, offered ample time for it. We therefore recommend that all this class of instruction and practice be made a positive requirement, that this department be entirely reorganized, provided with efficient teachers, and placed under special control of the tactical officers, subject to the commandant of cadets.

The exercises should be conducted under the advice of a surgeon skilled in such matters, not for the purpose of stopping the exercises for fear of accident, but to direct them to the proper physical development of each individual. This physical culture should undoubtedly include careful instruction in swimming; this is of the highest practical importance to the cadets in their future careers as officers in active service. As swimming in the deep current off Gee's Point is dangerous (fatal accidents having occurred there), and as the shoal water along the rest of the government ground has been destroyed for this purpose by the railroad now in progress of construction, and by gas house and sewage discharges, a swimming tank is necessary. This should be constructed in the immediate vicinity of the cadets' barracks, and provided with suitable a angements for heating it by steam during the winter.

4.—Examination of new cadets.

The examination of new cadets resulted in rejecting 49 out of a total of 118 who reported for examination. The examinations were conducted with the usual great fairness and impartiality, and each candidate was asked if he desired to have more time than the usual allowance of two hours for filling up the blank given for each subject.

The result does not give a high character for the progress of education in the schools of our country, when nearly one-half of the young men, all over seventeen years of age, selected from all parts of the country, are not proficient in the mere elements of learning required for admission to the Academy.

The rejected are not confined to any part of the country, and many of them come from the older States, whose citizens are proud in the belief that all their youth acquire a good knowledge of the elements of education.

The question of more perfect teaching must, of course, be left to the educational managers of the several States, but the government is greatly interested in having the youths who are to be educated by the country better prepared before they leave their Congressional districts for the Military Academy. The law authorizing appointments to be made a year in advance of admission would seem to give the War Department power to require an examination at their homes before receiving their orders to report at the Academy.

5.—Fiscal affairs.

The appropriations made by Congress for the support of the Military Academy are accounted for as expended under the several heads of appropriation. One of these items of appropriation is for the pay of the cadets, and at the end of every second month the cadets are mustered and sign receipts on the pay-roll in the same manner as is customary with the enlisted men in the Army. No money is, however, paid to them until the final settlement at graduation. So long as they remain at the Academy the treasurer keeps an account, which is posted after every pay-day, with each cadet, in which he credits the cadet with the amount of his pay and debits him with the expenditures made on his behalf. This system places in the hands of the treasurer (who is also cadet quartermaster and commissary) a considerable sum of money, to wit: the entire pay of the cadets, the accumulations on certain accounts herein specified, including the post fund, which he holds and which he accounts for in the following manner:

a. POST FUND.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$99 07
Receipts for the year	2,572 52
	2,671 59
Disbursements	2,189 31
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	482 28

This fund is unlike the others in the fact that it is not derived from the cadets' pay. It originated in the proceeds of the tax on the sutler or storekeeper, and of the sale of wood from the public lands, conducted in assimulation of the regulations of the Army at that time. Its receipts are now derived from the rent of various buildings which have been erected out of its proceeds. These buildings are the hotel and stables, the cottage occupied by the post-office, the brick store occupied by the confectioner, the stone stables used by the livery-stable keeper, and a frame house occupied by the barber.

b. CADET QUARTERMASTER FUND.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$7,910 80
Receipts for the year	51,272 80
	59,183 60
Disbursements	52,949 92
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	6,233 68

The following buildings have been erected from the proceeds of this fund:

1. A fire-proof brick storehouse for cadet quartermaster's supplies.
2. A frame house for two families, one part occupied by the cadet tailor and the other part rented to the livery-stable keeper.
3. A frame house occupied by a clerk.
4. A brick house occupied as quarters by the post commissary, an officer not connected with the cadet service.
5. A brick house occupied by cadet mess servants

All of these buildings have been built out of the above fund, raised by charging the cadets for their clothing more than it costs. There is, in addition, a stock of goods in the storehouse estimated to be worth from $10,000 to $15,000, which has been bought and paid for out of the same fund.

There was no law or propriety in erecting these buildings from a tax on cadets, and the law now in force requires that the clothing and mess provisions shall be delivered without any commission or advance, yet we find that the clerk to the quartermaster has an allowance of $300 per annum from this fund. Congress appropriated $900 per annum for this clerkship, and, in addition, he is furnished quarters. There is no authority for this charge upon the cadets, the excuse that a proper clerk could not be obtained for $900 a year and a house not being a valid one after Congress had determined how much he should be paid.

c. CADET COMMISSARY FUND.

Balance against June 1, 1881	$1,775 30
Disbursements for the year	47,541 75
	49,317 05
Receipts	47,117 80
Balance against June 1, 1881	2,199 25

There are some provisions on hand which may be equal in value to this amount. The money for their purchase has been taken temporarily from some other funds of which there is a surplus. We think that there should be an appropriation to purchase a stock of provisions, for which the commissary should account to the Treasury Department as is done in the Army. This would result in no loss to the government, but in a more perfect responsibility in the disbursing officer.

d. CADET LAUNDRY.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$4,926 56
Receipts for the year	9,586 86
	14,513 42
Disbursements	9,410 56
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	5,102 86

The cadet laundry was (it was stated) built by funds raised from the cadets' pay, and there is an accumulation of more than 50 per cent. of the yearly expenses. It was a great injustice to erect the laundry by a tax on the cadets, and a still greater injustice to accumulate this fund. The laundry and all other buildings at the Naval Academy were built by the government, and there seems to be no reason why they should not be so built here. Cadets should be charged only the actual cost of running the laundry, which should be made up every two months at pay-day.

e. GAS FUND.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$7,085 86
Receipts for the year	4,233 32
	11,319 18
Disbursements	5,250 76
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	6,068 42

The government furnishes the coal for the gas; all other expenses are paid by a tax on the cadets, and a charge for gas used by the officers. No charge is made to the government for gas used in the public lamps on the public roads. The gas house and appliances have been mostly paid for out of the charges to cadets and officers beyond the cost of gas, and a new gas-holder is being built to be paid for out of this fund. There

seems to be no reason why the government should not pay for these buildings or for the gas furnished to the cadets free of charge, as has been done at the Naval Academy.

f. EQUIPMENT FUND.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$27,328 00
Receipts for the year	11,120 00
	38,448 00
Disbursements (amount returned to cadets on leaving the Academy)	12,880 00
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	25,568 00

This fund is raised by a deposit of $4 per month by each cadet with the treasurer, from which, on graduating, he can furnish himself with the equipments, uniform, and other clothing necessary for his new position.

g. TRUST FUND.

United States registered bonds, 4½ per cent	$15,000 00
United States registered bonds, 4 per cent	10,000 00
	25,000 00
Interest on same,	
On hand June 1, 1880	439 06
Receipts during the year	1,075 00
On hand June 1, 1881	1,514 06

These two accounts are made up of the investment of the balance on hand of the equipment fund and the resulting interest.

h. PRINTING FUND.

Balance on hand June 1, 1880	$435 66
Receipts for the year	351 76
	787 42
Disbursements	109 40
Balance on hand June 1, 1881	678 02

This is another accumulating fund raised by charging more for the work than it costs. The yearly charge is here more than three times the expenditure.

Besides what has already been enumerated, there are six other funds in the hands of the treasurer, viz: for damages to quartermaster's property; for damages to library property; for the boat club; for the literary society, and for miscellaneous items. It is, of course, eminently proper that each cadet should pay the actual cost of any damages committed by him upon property intended for the common use, and the subscriptions to the societies are entirely voluntary. These funds are small in amount, and we see nothing in them to criticise.

In speaking of the larger funds raised by taxing the cadets, we desire to say that we believe them to be administered with the utmost fidelity in a pecuniary sense; but we are of opinion that the system adopted (which has not originated with the present authorities), is erroneous in principle and contrary to the spirit and intention of existing law.

The act of August 7, 1876, provides "that all supplies of all kinds and descriptions shall be furnished to the cadets at actual cost without any commission or advance over the costs." To raise funds from the cadets to construct and repair storehouses, laundry, gas works, or quarters, or pay for clerk hire, printing or supplies, is certainly not in accordance

with this law. The construction and repair of buildings of every kind should be paid from the annual appropriation for "improvements and repairs."

The surplus balances of these various funds and property on 1st of June 1881, as given above, amount to but little less than $50,000 in cash and buildings and the accumulation of stock, all of which is the result of small percentages and commissions in transacting the business of the cadets, accumulated during a long series of years. How properly to dispose of this property, and how to remedy the injustice of constructing permanent buildings from a tax on the cadets' pay is a difficult question.

We are of opinion that the money should be devoted to some purpose in which former cadets may have an interest and their successors a benefit. The suggestion has been made that these funds be appropriated to build a memorial hall at West Point to such cadets as have distinguished themselves or died in the public service. The hall to be used for social meetings of the cadets and for the annual meetings of the graduates. We deem the suggestion worthy of consideration.

Whatever disposition may be made of these balances, we recommend that hereafter the law requiring that cadets shall be furnished supplies at actual cost without commissions or advance be rigidly enforced. The officer performing the duties of commissary, quartermaster, and treasurer has passing through his hands annually more than $100,000 belonging to the cadets, of which there is no account but on his books; the last time a change was made in the office no receipts were given for the property ($10,000 to $15,000 in value) then in the storehouse. This money is all fully accounted for by the officer in the systems of accounts herein presented; but it is a question whether it would not be more judicious to have these accounts placed on the same footing as those of public moneys and passed upon by the proper officers of the United States Treasury Department; also to have his bonds made by law to cover this responsibility. The accounts show more than $40,000 in money in his hands on 1st June, 1881, besides the stock of goods in the storehouse. The quartermaster's supply of clothing and other articles are of good quality. The list embraces one hundred and twenty articles, varying in price from 1 cent to $20; a percentage varying from 5 to 12 per cent. is charged beyond the cost price to pay for incidental charges and for some of the labor of making the clothing, &c. To any considerable extent this inequality should not exist, and the whole cost should be charged to each article. The surplus should be nominal and should not be applied to any extraneous purpose.

The provisions for the cadet mess are generally of good quality and in ample quantities, with some exceptions. Some complaints were made in regard to the coffee, but we found the article furnished to be of good quality, and the strength such as would probably be approved by the medical officers. Complaints were also made of the *personnel* at the mess. The caterer, who was formerly the purveyor, is paid a salary, and has allowances of quarters entirely beyond the requirements of his position; he has an allowance of two servants and board for his family and servants, all at the expense of the cadets. At the Naval Academy the steward performs all the duties necessarily belonging to the caterer at a pay of $50 per month. The cadet commissary is required by law to perform all the duties of purveying and supervising, formerly performed by the purveyor. We think that the mess should be more immediately under the inspection of the commandant of cadets; his duties in this respect are not sufficiently comprehensive, nor well defined. The only provision in the regulations on the subject states that "when cadets complain

of provisions unsuitable for use," he shall investigate the complaint and report to the Superintendent. There is a great difference between being "unsuitable for use" and being not properly prepared. We think that the commandant, who is by regulations inspector of the mess, should be charged with the duty of inspecting the provisions on hand and examining the preparation of all articles to be placed on the table of the cadets, and that one of the tactical officers under him should be assigned to this special duty, be present at the meals, and make a thorough daily inspection of the food, both as to quality, quantity, proper preparation, and service. This officer should be quartered in the quarters attached to the mess hall, so that he may be convenient to his duties. Had an authorized inspector been present the complaints that have been made against the management would have been immediately attended to.

6.—Buildings.

The enlargement of the cadets' barracks, now in progress, will give the cadets and tactical officers sufficient accommodations, if the whole building is devoted to their use.

The addition to the barracks is to be properly heated and ventilated, the existing barracks having been very imperfect in this respect. The steam-heaters have been mostly without stop-cocks to regulate the heat in the rooms (we understand that this defect will be remedied during the present season); all the cold air is let in over the heads of the occupants, with very injurious effects. Provision should be made for ventilating all the rooms by introducing more air at a low temperature heated by steam-heaters. The health of the cadets requires this arrangement.

The barracks are also imperfectly lighted, the windows having small diamond panes with heavy sashes, obstructing the light. It is recommended that large panes with suitable sashes be substituted for all the windows of the barracks. We deem this very essential; nothing is more necessary for students than unobstructed light. The number of water-closets and urinals for the use of the cadets is not sufficient. They should be increased to fifty of each kind.

The academic building is occupied by the gymnasium, fencing-room, ordnance-museum, and chemical rooms on the first floor; and by recitation-rooms, drawing-rooms, and mineralogical cabinets, and model-rooms on the second and third floors. The gymnasium room has not sufficient height, and is not suitable for the purpose. The recitation rooms are heated by steam-heaters; warm air should be introduced into them for proper ventilation of which they are entirely deficient, as are also the recitation-rooms in the library building. The drawing-room is badly lighted and cannot be properly adapted to its purpose.

The suggestion is made that another story be added to this building, and that the building be remodeled, making it fire-poof, providing therein a suitable drawing-room, a room for public examinations, a room for the museum of ordnance and gunnery (the present one, although very creditable, needs additions and models of all the arms and implements and appliances of war), a room for the mineralogical and geological cabinets, and a room for models of works of civil and military engineering, and specimens of building materials. More space is required for all these objects, and if it is not deemed advisable to raise this building and make it fire-proof as suggested, then another fire-proof building should be provided.

A building for the gymnasium is needed.

The new hospital in progress of completion will furnish all the accom-

modation necessary for ordinary cases of sickness. It will have the defect of not being provided with an isolated ward for contagious diseases, there being but one thoroughfare to all the rooms. While small-pox always exists in some of our large cities it appears to be proper to be prepared for its appearance.

A swimming-tank and bath-house covered and heated in winter should be provided for the cadets, near the barracks. The new gymnasium, which is greatly needed, might be built in connection with this.

The ponton train, as already mentioned, is worn out and insufficient for proper instruction. A new and complete train is required, and the boat-house, which has been isolated by the construction of the railroad, should be rebuilt in a proper position. All these appliances should be in the most perfect condition.

The cavalry barracks, for the cavalry detachment, are situated at a long distance from the cavalry stables and riding-school; a suitable building should be constructed to quarter this detachment immediately north of the stables.

The new and well constructed additions to the system of water-supply seem to provide an ample quantity of water; a longer main (12 inches) is required from the filtering house to the academic building for greater safety in case of fire, and for better supply to officers' quarters and the barracks.

The sewerage is ample and in good order.

At the gas-works a new holder is being built out of the charges to officers and cadets. This building should be enlarged and repaired by an appropriation from Congress.

The laundry is in good order, but will soon need a new boiler, which should be provided for by an appropriation and not by a tax on cadets.

The building now used for a hospital will, when the new hospital shall be completed, be available for officers' quarters, for which purpose certain changes must be made. We recommend an appropriation for this purpose; also that new quarters be built for the chief-surgeon.

The Board of Visitors are very indifferently provided for, and the room occupied for their business meetings was often rendered unsuitable for such use by the necessary noise of the hotel. We think that a brick cottage, to cost about $10,000, should be built adjacent to the hotel for the use of the Board of Visitors; when not in use by them, it could be rented to the hotel or used as quarters for officers; such a building is provided at the Naval Academy.

There is a good steam fire-engine at the post, but there is want of better ladders and a four-wheeled ladder-carriage; the one provided is entirely unsuited to the steep roads over which it may be necessary to use it.

We recommend that all buildings at West Point be constructed under the direction of an officer of Engineers who has had practical experience in construction.

The entire cost of the construction of new and alteration and repair of old buildings and apparatus, which we have recommended, will be about $40,000, exclusive of changes and enlargements of the academic building, which would be extended over two years.

We submit in an appendix a detailed estimate for these purposes.

The Board of Visitors, namely, Maj. Gen. Milo S. Hascall, Henry B. Ledyard, esq., Dr. S. S. Laws, Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, General A. Stager, Hon. C. A. Boutelle, and Maj. Gen. George S. Greene, appointed by the President, organized at West Point June, 1881, by the appointment of Maj. Gen. George S. Greene president; Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell vice-president, and Hon. C. A. Boutelle secretary.

The Board requested the president to make the report to the Secretary of War.

In compliance therewith the undersigned has prepared the foregoing report, of which a copy has been sent to each member of the Board. Maj. Gen. Milo S. Hascall and H. B. Ledyard, esq., have signified their approval; no reply has been received from the other members of the Board.

Respectfully submitted.

Your obedient servants,

GEORGE S. GREENE,
Major-General, President of the Board of Visitors.
MILO S. HASCALL.

I fully concur in this report.

H. B. LEDYARD.

Hon. ROBERT T. LINCOLN,
Secretary of War.

APPENDIX TO THE REPORT OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS TO THE MILITARY ACADEMY, JUNE, 1881.

For changing windows of cadet barracks	$2,250
For additional water-closets and urinals	1,010
For bath-house, swimming-tank, and heating apparatus, to be erected near cadet barracks	3,500
For gymnasium building	3,000
For changing old hospital for officers' quarters	2,000
For a new ponton train and rebuilding boat-house	3,500
For cavalry barracks	10,000
For laying a new 12-inch main water-pipe from tank-house to east side of Academy building	4,500
For jackets, pads, masks, broadswords, &c., for fencing school	300
For apparatus and implements for gymnasium	750
	40,510

For enlarging and remodeling the Academy building and making it fire-proof, such sum as may be found necessary upon survey and detailed estimates.

MINORITY REPORT.

BY GENERAL D. C. BUELL, GENERAL M. S. HASCALL, AND H. B. LEDYARD, ESQ.

WEST POINT, N. Y., *June* 25, 1881.

SIR: The undersigned members of the Board of Visitors dissent from the opinion of some members of the Board upon the merits of a question concerning the government of the Military Academy, and from the opinion of other members as to the policy of bringing the subject forward at this time. We think, on the contrary, that the Academy ought to rest on a foundation of public confidence which will make it at no time unwise to discuss a question affecting its healthy condition, and that the matter referred to ought now to be reviewed. We deem it our duty, therefore, though constituting only a minority of the Board, to bring the subject to your notice. The remarks with which we preface the essential question are not irrelevant to it, and may even be necessary for a comprehensive view of it.

The subject of military education has, in recent times especially, been deemed worthy of the careful consideration of the most civilized nations. It may almost be said that the attention bestowed upon it in different countries has been in proportion to the degree of civilization in each case. Of the prominent European nations, Russia has been the most backward and France the most advanced in this particular. In our own country the subject was taken up at an early day after the Revolution, the men who fought through the war without the advantage of such education being ardent advocates of it after the war was over. Without tracing minutely the growth of the idea in this country, we may observe that it was embodied by an act of Congress establishing the Military Academy in 1802, made marked progress in 1812, and finally took a well-matured and characteristic development during the administration of Mr. Madison, when Col. Sylvanus Thayer, an officer of Engineers, was sent to Europe by the government to study the various schools then in operation, with a view to the adoption of a system for our use. After a sojourn of two years abroad Colonel Thayer returned in 1817, and gave to the Academy at West Point substantially the shape and character which it now has. In general features it conforms more nearly to the Polytechnic School of France than to any other, but it differs from that and other schools in combining in one institution the fundamental scientific basis of that school with the special application and training which belong to the several branches of the military service, and in France and elsewhere are supplied at separate special schools.

It is not our purpose to discuss the merits of the system thus matured, but to draw attention to the plan of government under which it grew up and which exerted a powerful influence upon its development and success. Originally, and until within a few years, the immediate government of the Academy was in the hands of the Corps of Engineers,

subject to the War Department. The chief of the corps was specially responsible for its condition, and therefore watched its conduct, studied its wants, and kept the department advised of every question concerning it. The Superintendent was selected from the Engineer Corps, and the character of that corps as a body gave reasonable assurance that an inferior or unqualified person would not be found in the place.

In 1866 the supervision of the Academy was taken from the Corps of Engineers, and the superintendency opened to the Army at large. The result has not justified the change. It was not to be expected that the Superintendents would be more capable or faithful than formerly, and, on the other hand, some important advantages of the old system have been sacrificed. There has been virtually no supervisory and restraining or guiding authority outside. As far as responsibility is concerned, the Academy has been thrown into the category of general military commands, amenable only to the check of an ordinary inspection, and the operation of disjointed decisions; and exempted from that intimate scrutiny and control which its peculiar mission requires. That latitude of authority which in the Army often results more from the circumstance of isolation than from any necessity of the occasion, has attached to the Superintendent, who, with no one prepared to question him, brings into contact with the Academy, practices in administration which are unsuitable or objectionable; and in academic matters interposes his authority in a manner prejudicial to the discipline and educational character of the institution. Being out of rule of ordinary assignment, and placed in the field of special selection, the position is practically open to the competition of rival aspirants, and so of course exposed to influences which undertake to warp the judgment of the appointing power, making the choice to depend on the strength or adroitness of the influence, rather than on the fitness of the person to be chosen. It is unnecessary to add that the influences which carry him in, must not be expected to stop on the outside, nor is it necessary to speculate on the effect of such conditions upon the character and usefulness of the institution.

The inauguration of this evil has been supplemented by another which operates in the same general direction, and, besides, involves a public expense and entanglement of duties wholly without compensation. The post of West Point has been converted into a geographical department, with all the machinery essential to such a command. There being apparently none but personal reasons for this arrangement, we must expect to find personal considerations pervading its operation. For example, the commander or Superintendent will desire to surround himself with relatives and personal favorites in the staff positions. That such a usage is not unknown to the Army cannot be denied; but neither can it be commended; and it may be allowable to question whether it is advisable to announce in this practical manner to the young men who are being educated for the public service, that the obligations of public duty suggest no objection to this intimate mingling of family and official relations.

We refrain from pursuing more particularly the hurtful effects which must be expected from the two measures to which we have invited attention, or from answering at length the grounds on which they were introduced. We recommend that the Military Academy and post of West Point be confined to the purpose of military education, with a Superintendent having the local rank of colonel, and under the supervision which existed prior to the present arrangement. It is desirable and even necessary that the Superintendent should thoroughly understand

the nature, and be imbued with the importance of military discipline in the Academy; but it is not necessary or desirable that he should have that purely soldierly taste for military command, which would be apt to divert him from the essential functions of educational and economical supervision. The strictly soldierly qualities find an appropriate place and ample occupation in the office of the commandant, who is taken from the line of the Army, and ought always to be selected with a view to those qualities and to a high professional and moral tone.

Some of our most distinguished military men have occupied that office, and the best Superintendents have been those whose fame in connection with the Academy rests on the exercise of judicial and administrative qualities.

In presenting these opinions we repel earnestly every interpretation of them that might be regarded as a disparagement of the Army at large, or that would put us in the attitude of denying, or out of the attitude of affirming, that in every branch of the service are to be found officers who are equal to the highest responsibilities of their profession. We have failed to express our meaning, and to do justice to the subject, if we have not shown that the question is with reference to the natural operation of two distinct systems for the government of the Academy, and not with reference to the relative merits of officers who might be chosen from different branches of the service to have charge of it.

There is another question to which we think it proper to invite your attention, and upon which we venture to offer some views. We introduce the subject in this place because it did not present itself until after a majority of the Board had withdrawn.

The question of educational qualifications for admission to the Academy is one of very great importance, with regard both to the educational standard to be maintained in the institution and the practical problem of filling vacancies. There were at this term 118 vacant cadetships, and of that number of young men who presented themselves for admission, 49 were found unqualified. Yet the subjects of examination were only reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, American history, and English grammar, but carried to a tolerably trying test.

The number of cadets annually found deficient in the first and second years at the Academy would seem to show that the standard of proficiency for admission cannot be reduced if the present course of studies is to be mastered in four years; but we are not quite sure that that is an infallible conclusion; we are not sure that the preliminary examination affords a sufficient indication of what would be the result of a further trial of the candidates in the Academy. It is admitted, at all events, that the Academic course ought not to be reduced, and it is possibly true that something more than an average ability would be required to attain the present standard of graduation with less preparation than is now exacted for admission.

The question of preliminary qualification is not an easy one to regulate satisfactorily. Local competitive examinations, as now often employed by Congressmen in making the nominations, do not with any certainty prevent the recurrence of a large proportion of rejected candidates, partly because the proficiency which they undertake to determine is only relative instead of absolute. Moreover, we think that other well-grounded objections can be advanced against the method, mainly but not wholly in view of the inequality of educational privileges in different parts of the country, and in consideration also of a wide privilege of competition *within the Academy*, which we think ought by some means to be preserved.

It is a matter of policy and right that the country should secure the best talent in its service; but in making appointments to the Academy it has not been the rule to confine the search to those who enjoy the highest educational advantages, and experience has justified the more liberal plan on which the institution has been conducted. The Academy has produced many able and accomplished officers from young men who entered with very meager preparation.

The excluding effect of inferior preparation could, of course, be overcome without impairing the academic course, by lowering the standard of admission and adding another year to the term, but to that method also serious objections can be urged.

Above either of these methods of disposing of the difficulty, we would prefer a less rigid standard of admission, without any reduction in the academic course, and without any change in the term. The number of deficients, in the first year especially, would perhaps be increased; but it is probable also that the relative standing of those who might enter would be quite different at the expiration of the first year from what the entrance examination would have indicated. Of course, in any plan of selection, the disadvantage of inferior preparation in the start, other qualities being equal, can never be entirely overcome in the Academy. A larger proportion of such students must fail in the race; but those of them who succeed will be above the average in ability, though they may take a relatively lower graduating standing.

A more satisfactory solution of the whole question could, we doubt not, be obtained by means of a suitable preparatory school.

Without here entering much into the particulars of such a scheme, it may be suggested that the school should have a military organization, and admit a given number of candidates, not less than two for each vacancy at the Academy; that the period should be one year, without any privilege of continuance or reappointment in the school; that the preliminary qualifications should be as low as would permit a youth of somewhat more than average ability to qualify for admission to the Academy in the alloted time; and that the limits of age should be sixteen for the minimum, and eighteen for the maximum. The final examination at the school, which would also determine the question of admission to the Academy, should be a competitive one among the candidates for each vacancy, and upon a standard not lower than that now enforced; and the rate of progress at the school, and other marks of superior merit, should count more than the degree of proficiency, if such a rule could be carried out. The same school could be used to prepare candidates for the Naval Academy also.

Such a school, while maintaining and even affording the means of advancing the educational standard of the Academy, would offer its honors to the competition of many deserving youths who must now be excluded by the standard of admission; would bring the competition of cadets in the Academy more upon the basis of natural ability; would, we think, secure a higher average of ability among the cadets, and would start the graduate upon his course at a better age than under the present system. Twenty-two is much too old for a cadet to enter the Academy. We have designated sixteen and eighteen as the limits for the preparatory school, and with or without such a school the limits should, in our opinion, be seventeen and nineteen for the Academy. Twenty is the maximum age for admission to the Polytechnic School of France, but the pupil enters with a far higher grade of education there than here, and completes his course in two years.

This communication affords much too narrow space to discuss thoroughly

the question here presented. The public expense will perhaps be made the ground of objection to the school suggested; and among the benefits to result from it, in addition to those aleady mentioned, the useful knowledge and training carried back into the community by those pupils who do not enter the Academy, are not unworthy to be counted.

The number of cadets annually found deficient in the Academy, at great public expense and with other attendant evils, would disappear or be largely diminished. The proficiency of the future cadet would be reasonably assured in the school; from which the unchosen candidate would return to his home much benefited, and without any reproach of incapacity, but only under the condition of having been less successful than his competitor.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. C. BUELL.

The above views meet my cordial approbation.

MILO S. HASCALL.

I concur in the above report.

H. B. LEDYARD.

Hon. ROBERT T. LINCOLN,
Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.