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THE DISTURBANCES AT THE  
PARIS MEDICAL SCHOOL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES,

Sir,—As the only "stranger within the gates" on Monday, the 21st, it may interest your readers to have the account of an eye-witness. There have been three "rows" in the Latin quarter this semester. At the Sorbonne on successive Wednesdays the students have made a demonstration at the lecture of Professor Thalamas, on account of certain strictures which he made last year upon "the Maid of France"; so that the virus of disorder has been on both sides of the Boulevard St. Michel. At the Medical School there has been a steady protest by the first and second year students against Professor Nicholas and his assistant, who were brought here last year from Nancy. Partly on personal grounds and partly owing to dissatisfaction with new regulations and changes in the dissecting-room, this has been a very serious disturbance, which culminated to-day in the closing of the school (for the first and second years) until March 1.

The affair of Monday, the 21st, was of a very different character. The participants were not students, but a group of men comparable in years and repute with the assistant physicians of the London hospitals or with the younger Oxford tutors—men of from 30 to 35 years of age, many of them with European reputations. The examination was the *concours* for *agrégation*—i.e., for the *agrégé* professorships for 20 places in all the branches in all the medical schools of France. There were 128 candidates. A new regulation had come into force by which this was to be a preliminary *concours* of admissibility, an examination in elementary subjects—*anatomy* and *physiology*. This has been most unpopular, and the candidates protest that these are subjects with which they have finished, and that it is absurd to ask men actively engaged in practical work in the hospitals, and even distinguished investigators, to take up these elementary branches again. As there were rumours of a terrible *chahut* I was early at the Medical School, and with a letter from a member of the jury of the *concours* I was admitted. By 11 30 the police were in full force in the Rue de l'École de Médecine, and the gates of the Court were guarded by agents who only allowed the candidates to pass. The crowd increased rapidly, and about 12 o'clock the main gate was forced and a crowd of about 250 got into the Court. The senior men collected in groups and protested energetically against the invasion of the school precincts by the police, some of whom were not in uniform. A good deal of jostling and a few serious scuffles occurred, but, as a rule, it was a good-natured crowd, though boisterous and excited. About 1 o'clock an attempt was made to force the doors leading to the small amphitheatre, where the *concours* was to take place, and the glass panels were broken. M. Lepine then called out the soldiers (Republican Guard), who took possession of the Court and began to clear out all but the candidates. Meanwhile two members of the jury came out, and after conference with several of the leading candidates induced a majority of them to come into the amphitheatre. I brought up the rear of a pretty orderly set of men as they filed upstairs, but once inside there was a great row, every one talking or shouting, and in the midst of it the jury walked in headed by Professor Bouchard. A storm of protests greeted them as they took their seats, and one candidate, who acted as spokesman, declared that the *concours* was a farce, in which they would take no part. The hubbub



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It seems a pity that the police and the soldiers were called in, as most of the candidates and the members of the jury seemed to be on the most friendly terms, and if left alone could have settled the matter between themselves. But I suppose there was an outside element to be considered, and the student body has been in an excited state.

On Thursday, at 7 30, the *concours* was held in the Medical School, but only 28 candidates took part; the others refused to write on the papers. By 9 a.m. the school was in a state of siege, every avenue to it guarded by soldiers and police, and throughout the day there were numerous attacks by the students. A good many arrests were made, and there were a few serious injuries. The streets were cleared by the mounted guards. Yesterday and to-day have been quiet, and notices are posted of the closure of the Medical School until March 1 and the adjournment *sine die* of the *concours*.

While such disturbances are most regrettable, the good record of the past 50 years does not bear out your statement that the larval medical man is more prone to rowdyism than his fellow-students of other faculties. In London you have no cause for complaint, and the only disturbance of late years was a very just protest against a disgraceful insult to a great teaching body and to the whole profession. As I have seen him during the past three months at work in the hospitals, the Paris medical student is a very hard-working fellow, keenly alive to the importance of scientific and practical medicine, and with a charming touch of human sympathy with the patients entrusted to his care.

Yours, &c.,

Paris, Dec. 26.

WILLIAM OSLER.

*The Little Bazaar*