PAYMENT OF UNION SURGEONS.— EMANCIPATION OF THE PRO- FESSION FROM BAD LAWS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In your Number for April 11th appears a criticism, by an anonymous correspondent, on the Petition of the Gloucester Practitioners relative to Poor-Law Medical Relief. I trust you will therefore give me an opportunity of replying briefly to his observations.

The framers of that petition did not specify the considerations which guided them in the proposed variation of the average payment per case (according to distance, density of population, &c. &c.), because, had they done so, their petition would have assumed the form and bulk of a report. Nor did the petition by any means represent *merely their own* collective opinions; but its recommendations were based on acknowledged *principles*, on the concurrent testimony of the medical witnesses examined by the Parliamentary Committee of 1838, on the published reports (and other documents) of both the Provincial and British Medical Associations,—as well as on the admissions in the last Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners themselves.

It has, therefore, a weight of authority in its support, to which the letter of "JUSTITIA" cannot pretend.

With regard to *facts*, the whole body of the evidence referred to is directly opposed to the assertion of "JUSTITIA," "that a payment per case of from 8s. to 12s. would have the effect, in many places, of considerably reducing the present inadequate remuneration;" therefore, until "JUSTITIA" authenticates his statement, by mentioning the Union and the district in which there is now a "considerably" higher remuneration, he must pardon the bulk of your readers (including myself) if they suppose that these "many places" exist only in his imagination.

If he will take the trouble of reading the several documents to which I have referred, particularly Mr. Farr's admirable evidence before the Committee, he will see that *all the points* which he very correctly supposes should influence the rate of remuneration in rural districts, have been specially mentioned and duly considered; his "surprise that these points have not been alluded to" will, therefore, cease, when he has made himself better acquainted with the subject.

It is, no doubt, *possible* that a district may be found which has afforded a higher payment per case than that suggested. But "exceptio probat regulam." Before we can allow a *singular* case to form a precedent for opposing a *general* reform, we must be informed of *all* the circumstances of the locality, namely, the population of the dis-

trict, the amount of poor-rates, or of pauperism, the extent in square miles, the nature of the country, the residence of the surgeon, his salary, the mode of *supplying medical relief*, the number of patients, and the average duration of cases. Some of these particulars, viewed in connection with the rest, *might* disclose such a defective administration of relief as would account for the anomaly.

If Parliament were to enforce a scale of limitation to the size of districts, provision should, of course, be made for unavoidable exceptions arising from peculiar local circumstances; but no deviations from such a scale should be sanctioned, until *specially* reported to some competent central authority. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. W. RUMSEY.

Gloucester, April 25, 1840.

DUBLIN UNITED MEDICAL CLUB.

THE Committee of the "United Medical Club," 38, Dawson-street, Dublin, have requested us to give insertion to the following paragraph:—

"A letter having appeared in THE LANCET of April 18th, dated 'United Medical Club,' the Committee of the Club, without wishing to express any opinion on the subject-matter of such letter, feel it their duty to state that they do not hold themselves responsible for any sentiments expressed by individual members of the Club in letters which may be so dated."

Sir CHARLES BELL is in London, on his way to Rome. It has been said that he intends to vacate his Professorial chair in Edinburgh, the University not affording to him the position and advantages which were anticipated on his retreat to that city. He has, however, long been anxious to visit Italy, where John Bell, after his residence in Edinburgh, spent some time in study.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

De Blainville's "Comparative Osteology."—An accident prevents us from having the announced portion of these Lectures ready for publication in this week's LANCET. It will appear, with very numerous engravings, in the next.

A Constant Reader.—We have no means of obtaining the information demanded.

J. F.—Dr. Johnson's.

Received, the letters of Dr. Epps, Mr. Samuel, and Mr. Besler.