MR. FENWICK IN REPLY TO MR. TURNER ON
THE OPERATION OF "FIRING."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I BEG to offer a few remarks on Mr. Turner's opinions on firing, considering them of a dangerous tendency, and rendered much more so by being presented to the public through the medium of so widely and deservedly circulated a journal as THE LANCET. Notwithstanding Mr. Turner's assertion of his whole life having been sedulously employed in the veterinary science, I take the liberty of informing him, though I do not doubt but that he is well aware, there are many others that have been much longer, and equally zealous in the cause as himself, and who have had equally as good, if not better, opportunities of witnessing and, at the same time, are fully capable of judging of the effects of firing. In the rough country, says Mr. Turner, where he practised, (describing the worst kind of exertion, he alludes to hunting, which duty I believe the horse is not called on to perform oftener than twice or three times a week, and that only for about four months,) the most severe injuries and diseased joints occur, and on this he grounds his practice. Now in London alone, I mean to say, we have as many, if not more, diseases requiring the aid of the firing irons, than are to be found in the whole county of Surrey, and I positively assert, that, independent of my own practice, I have seen and known a great many horses successfully fired in the *common method* by various practitioners. Mr. Turner is even compelled to admit that firing is successfully resorted to all over the country, and if he would have us believe that they all and every-where cauterise through the skin, then Mr. Turner's *deep* method is nothing new; if they do not, why in his opinion it was of no avail whatever. Now if this had been the real state of the case, we can only reasonably presume that firing would have long since sunk into oblivion; but such is not the fact, therefore it must be admitted that the present mode that is practised by experienced individuals, is a good one; and this the profession at large will, I feel confident, admit, and even Mr. Turner himself, I hope, on a little *deeper* reflection, if he is not too much wedded to his "monstrous presumption." But further, in order to put the case beyond all cavil, I will suppose Mr. Turner called on to fire a diseased fetlock-joint, a case of frequent occurrence; would he then make the *red-hot iron* pass boldly through the skin by crucial incisions till it reached the cellular tissue immediately covering the ligaments, tendons, periosteum, &c. He says, "To go thus fearlessly

to work requires great dexterity, tact, talent, and *nerve*;" and I think he might as well have added, an eye possessing as great an optic power as the most powerful microscope, with a firing iron, although red-hot, invisible to the naked eye, for he says it is to be done with all due caution; then, with all due deference to Mr. Turner's *deep knowledge*, let me inquire how he avoids cauterising and dividing the important nerves, arteries, and veins, that are immediately under the skin, and under which great part of the cellular tissue he describes also lies.* Why, in fact, if Mr. Turner fires so deeply as he would have us believe, it is evident that he must scorch or divide the horse's nerves with the actual cautery. But after all, Mr. Turner has not condescended to inform us in what period *his patients recover*, a point of the deepest importance to the owner; but he says it would fill a volume to describe the fore and after treatment, &c., which this *deep plan* requires. In this I sincerely believe him; and have not the least doubt but that many months must frequently elapse before the poor suffering animal is relieved from the effect of this unnecessary torture, to say nothing about the *sequel*.

It may be, perhaps, said, How can the animal be in torture if the nerves are divided? What! Are the inflammation and sloughing, which are certain to follow, nothing? But, says Mr. Turner, "neither I nor my brother ever suffer the excessive irritation and constitutional disturbance to steal a day's march on us." (Fortunate men!) In this I must confess, if true, Messrs. Turner are luckier practitioners than your humble servant; for in the few instances that have come under my observation when the animal may happen to have made a sudden and violent struggle before the iron could be withdrawn, and it has unfortunately gone through the skin and burnt the cellular tissue, but without injuring either tendon, ligament, or periosteum, I have invariably found inflammation and sloughing follow, and many months have even elapsed before the poor animal has been again fit for service, and in one instance I recollect the animal became nearly useless from the consequences. Mr. Turner wishes to make it appear that the use of the actual cautery is nearly abolished in the metropolis. In this respect he is really greatly mistaken; and during my practice of thirty years I have never known the utility of firing called in question, or fail in its effects in a general point of view; it is only condemned by those who could not properly

* Any person desirous of ascertaining this fact, may satisfy themselves by calling at my residence, where they will see the whole structure (skin excepted) exhibited at one view.

perform the operation, and I call upon Mr. Turner to inform me when and where he has ever seen the *highly-talented professor* of the Veterinary College, or the *assistant*, Mr. Sewell, *give the fire* in a skilful manner. I believe there is not an old farrier to be found in the country, that would not be ashamed of his *calling*, on seeing such specimens of firing as I have there seen attributed to the deputy. Now Sir, I do not pretend to any great knowledge in human surgery, but as Mr. Turner proposes firing through the skin by crucial incision, merely to set the over-distended capsular ligament at liberty would not the knife be more humane, rather than run the risk of the excessive irritation and dangerous sloughing, which I have every reason to believe would follow Mr. Turner's proposed horrid and monstrous operation. Mr. Turner, I perceive, has extended his deep firing also to the canine species. POOR ANIMALS! I hope this plan will not long continue in use, such a practice being unnecessarily cruel, and barbarous in the extreme, whether practised on man or brute. I have not entered into the true rationale and effects of firing, trusting some one more able will handle that part of the subject, which Mr. Turner does not appear to me fully to comprehend. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

GEORGE FENWICK, Vet. Surg.

Grosvenor Mews, Bond Street,

August 24, 1830.

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, Sept. 4, 1830.

THE protracted Inquest which was held upon the body of the unfortunate Miss CASHIN, has terminated in a verdict of manslaughter against JOHN ST. JOHN LONG. Our peculiar position in this unhappy proceeding enjoins upon us the strict observance of silence; we shall offer, therefore, no opinion upon the merits or the demerits of the case, but content ourselves with inserting an article taken from *The Times*, and another from *The Medico-Chirurgical Review*. After the trial of ST. JOHN LONG, we shall not hesitate to speak out boldly; but at present, as we stand almost as the prosecutor of Mr. LONG, it would not be just if one word were to proceed from our pen,

which could influence the minds of the jury in the forthcoming trial.

As the presence of the Editor of this Journal at the Inquest has been by some deemed obtrusive, we think it right that the members of the profession should be put in possession of the circumstances which led him to assume the character of a medical advocate on that occasion. Late on Friday night two gentlemen called at the residence of Mr. WAKLEY, and stated that an inquest was to be held on the body of a young lady who had been under the treatment of JOHN ST. JOHN LONG; that her life had terminated almost suddenly, and under circumstances which appeared to demand a rigid investigation; that the sister of the deceased young lady, who also had been under Mr. LONG's care, was in a dying state, and only expected to survive a few hours; that the family was (from the sister kingdom, and that the mother and brother-in-law, quite strangers to London, were suffering the most intense anguish, were half distracted, and knew not what course to adopt; that the brother-in-law, Mr. SWEETMAN, had been strongly urged to request the Editor to attend the inquest, and act for the family, in order that the ends of public justice might not be defeated. In compliance with the wishes of the relatives, the two gentlemen observed, they had then called. Mr. WAKLEY pointed out to them that his appearance at the inquest at that time, as he was a candidate for the office of Coroner, would to many persons have a very disagreeable appearance, and, in the absence of explanation, would at first sight indicate bad taste, if not defective judgment. Moreover, he represented to them, that having long ago denounced Mr. LONG as a quack and an imposter, his appearing, as it were, against Mr. LONG, might be thought to partake of vindictiveness. He therefore refused, in the most positive manner, to take any part in the proceedings, unless he received, on the following morn-