alkaloids; and (2) animal food-stuffs undergo great deterioration during the progress of the inflammatory state. We cannot speak so confidently with regard to lymphadenosis, as the effect of the growth on the metabolism of the tissues generally is not well understood. At the same time it is better to err on the right side, and in this instance we hold that it would be wise to condemn the meat, considering it is taken from an animal the subject of a general constitutional malady. It seems to us not unlikely that a greater amount of harm is done to public health by the ingestion of diseased meat than either the public or the profession have any idea of.—ED. L.

THE CORONERS' WITNESSES ACT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The fact that the profession owes to the late Thomas Wakley, Esq., M.P., the initiation and successful enactment of the Coroners' Witnesses Act induces me to forward you a decision which I have obtained as to the interpretation of the fifth section of the said Act. It has doubtless not escaped your notice that some coroners have laid down the rule that the infirmaries established under the Metropolitan Poor Act, 1867, come under the category of public institutions where, in virtue of the aforesaid fifth section, the medical officers are compelled to make post-mortems and attend to give evidence, under the warrant of the coroner, without fee or reward. I have always protested against this interpretation of the section, and I was confirmed in that view by a conversation I had some thirty years ago with the late Mr. Wakley, who not only gave me his opinion on the subject, but told me all the difficulties he had to encounter from country gentlemen, who thought that a huge expense would be incurred if the surgeons and physicians of our voluntary hospitals were paid fees for post-mortems and for giving evidence in coroners' courts. He further said that it was only because he dreaded that the Bill would be rejected that he assented to the amendment in the fifth section. I on several occasions gave evidence at inquests held by him at the Strand Union Workhouse, and was always paid the customary fees. The infirmary of the workhouse is a building established in connexion with the workhouse, and in no sense can it be regarded as a separate and distinct institution, and therefore prohibiting the payment of the fee in question. By reference to Lumley, the late legal adviser to the Local Government Board, and to a footnote in Glen's "Consolidated Orders," page 179, it will be seen that the central department holds the same opinion on the subject which I have always contended for.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
JOSEPH ROGERS, Chairman of the Council,
Poor Law Medical Officers' Association.
Montague-place, W.C., Dec. 31st, 1884.

[COPY.]

14, South-square, Gray's-inn, 18th Dec. 1884.

I do not think the fifth section of the Medical Act (Witnesses) applies to workhouse infirmaries. A workhouse infirmary may be described as a building or place belonging to the workhouse, and used for the reception of sick paupers, therefore part and parcel of the workhouse. It would therefore not come under the term of a place attached to a hospital. It is decidedly not a public infirmary or a medical institution, and is not supported by endowments, and undoubtedly not by *voluntary* subscriptions. The question that remains, so if possible to bring it within the section, is, Is a workhouse a charitable institution? There is a case mentioned in *Prideaux*, vol. ii., 398, and reported in 28 L. J. ex., 326, which is a case where a conveyance was made to trustees to build a workhouse, the contention being that it was a charitable institution, and came within the statute of mortmain; but it was held not to be within that statute, as there were no charitable uses. From that you will gather that an infirmary to a workhouse cannot be, if the workhouse itself is not, a charitable institution; neither can it be a public one for the above reason. Whether it was or not contemplated to include institutions of this sort at the time of the passing of the Act is not of so much importance as whether the infirmary in question comes within the definition of one of those institutions in which the officers are precluded from receiving fees. I am of opinion that

such do not come within the fifth section. I should have wished to refer to Lumley's work, but we have not it in the library. The medical officers should sue in the county court.
(Signed) ARTHUR BEETHAM, Barrister-at-Law.

BRITISH GYNÆCOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I see that in to-day's LANCET my name is included in the list of elected office-bearers of the British Gynæcological Society. As a matter of fact, I never heard of the existence, or of the proposed existence, of the Society till December 30th, three days after the election, so there is evidently some mistake. On the 30th I received a request from Dr. Heywood Smith to allow myself to be placed on the Council, and on January 2nd I wrote to him declining the offer, for reasons assigned. These reasons implied neither approval nor disapproval of the new Society, a question on which I have no adequate means of forming an opinion.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

King-street, Manchester, Jan. 3rd, 1885. J. THORBURN, M.D.

* * We have received a note from one of the secretaries of the Society correcting the mistake referred to above.—ED. L.

THE EXCISION OF A CEREBRAL TUMOUR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is still, perhaps, open to argument whether the step taken by "F.R.S." in sending to *The Times* an account of the case of excision of a cerebral tumour was, as you have described it, an act displaying more zeal than discretion, or a masterly stroke of policy which might have gone far to settle the vivisection question, had not the patient unfortunately died. "F.R.S." was evidently misinformed by those who instigated his letter (for he has said that he had no personal knowledge of the case), and led to believe that the man's complete recovery was secured when there were still dangers ahead.

The position which you take up with regard to vivisection when you declare that it is morally justifiable and has rendered valuable assistance to medical and surgical science and practice, but requires to be carefully regulated, seems to me sound and unassailable; but it is to be borne in mind that the question is now not between unrestricted and safeguarded vivisection, but between safeguarded vivisection and the total suppression of experiments upon animals. A Society, powerfully patronised and with ample funds at its command, having for its avowed object the final prohibition of all such experiments, keeps up what Miss Cobbe proudly calls a "yearly growing agitation." A Bill with the same aim has been introduced during each of the last two sessions of Parliament, and has obtained considerable support; and those who know something of the temper and tendencies of the enormous additions that are about to be made to the constituencies tell us that they will be readily caught by the clap-trap of the zoophilists, and misled by a pseudo-humanitarian cry which deceives even large numbers of the cultivated classes, if we may judge by the vote at Oxford last year on the grant for Professor Burdon Sanderson's laboratory. An attitude of dignified abstention from controversy on the part of scientific men is all very well, but it is not thus that popular fights are won, and there is no disguising the fact that the question of vivisection will have to be fought out in the popular arena. Under such circumstances silence and contempt are apt to be mistaken for a confession of weakness or conscious guilt, and it would be pusillanimity in those who believe that regulated experiments on animals are essential to the further progress of the healing art to stand aloof from a discussion which, however disagreeable to them, involves such important issues. If men of science are not up and doing, there is a possibility that experiments on animals will be put a stop to within the next ten years by an Act which it might take a quarter of a century of labour and agitation to get repealed.

Are we to leave our future masters to the fallacious guidance of anti-vivisection demagogue and shrieking sisters? or are we to tell them the plain truth in a language "understood of the people," and teach them how much their own interests are bound up with the progress of