ART. XII.—The Cause of Eclampsia.* By Professor Hastings Tweedy, F.R.C.P.I., President of the Section of Obstetrics in the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—I esteem it a great honour to be elected for the second time President of the Obstetrical Section of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland.

The Section has done much in the past to foster enthusiasm and thought in the Dublin School, and the success of its achievements must fill your President with pride.

The saddest duty which devolves upon me at this our opening meeting is to voice our great sorrow at the loss we have sustained in the death of our Senior Fellow and Past President—Dr. Dancer Purefoy. The absence of his familiar figure comes to us to-night as a shock. We can so clearly recall his presence, lending prestige and enlightenment to our meetings throughout last session and other sessions too numerous for many to remember. He died as he would have desired, active to the last, leaving

* The Inaugural Address to the Section of Obstetrics in the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland, delivered on Friday, November 7, 1919. [For the discussion on this Address see page 251].
us an ideal of the courteous gentleman, the polished debater, and the true friend.

Dr. Henry Jellett's approaching departure for New Zealand is another loss to our Section it can ill afford. His long services in France deprived us for several Sessions of his presence. With cessation of hostilities we hoped to see him again supporting and guiding our debates with his impressive personality, but this is not to be. The New World's gain is our loss, and our united good wishes will follow him there.

During the war our Section encountered many vicissitudes and its work was carried on mainly by the exertions of its senior members, I trust that a change is coming, and that our younger Fellows henceforward will take a more prominent share in its deliberations.

In saying this let me not be understood to belittle the work of last Session, for indeed it was responsible for some of the most important communications ever submitted for our consideration. To select two, I may recall Sir William Smyly's paper on the treatment of Accidental Haemorrhage by Caesarean Section rather than by Hysterectomy, and Professor Dixon's paper on the Uterine Supports.

It is obvious that an increase of knowledge tends more and more to restrict the number of questions suitable for presentation at a Society such as this, and it is the business of your President to jealously keep open every channel of possible debate, and when to-night I declare that the cause of Eclampsia is no longer a mystery, I feel as though I am committing an act of academic suicide.

At the International Congress, London, 1913, I read a paper which suggested that ordinary food became poisonous during pregnancy, and when in this condition it gives rise to toxæmia and eclampsia.

I was led to such a conclusion by noting the recurrence of fits in women who had partaken of food even in small quantities, milk, whey, alcohol, &c. It was evident, too, that the bad effect was not produced as a result of decomposition, or irritation within the intestines, for it followed very rapidly after the food was taken. All experience