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Original Communications.

GYNECOLOGY AND OBSTETRICS.

By A. LAPHORN SMITH, B.A., M.D., Lecturer on Gynecology, Bishop's College, Montreal. Attending Physician to the Women's Hospital.

A case of prolonged gestation extending over a period of 334 days is reported by Dr. Merom Maus in the *N. Y. Medical Journal*, May 11th, 1889. He says: "On account of the protraction of pregnancy and her immense size, I fancied that hydrannios might be the cause of her retarded labor, and made preparation to aspirate the amnion, but abandoned the attempt on account of the difficulty of inserting the aspirator." The lady menstruated on the 13th May and was delivered on the 14th April. According to the tables in our visiting lists she should have been relieved on the 21st February. According to Matthew Duncan's method, and taking the last day of menstruation as 17th May and adding 278 days, this pregnancy should have come off on the 23rd February. I have referred to this case for a double reason. First, to record my own experience, which is that I have found that the majority of labors come on later than either the tables or the above rule for calculating would indicate. A recent writer, whose name I forget, advises when in doubt to tell the

woman a later date rather than an earlier one, for the reason that if it comes on a week or two sooner than she expected she will be so glad that it is all over that she will forgive you, while if it comes on a couple of weeks later than the date fixed she will be worrying about it constantly. The other reason is to call attention to the time of conception, which may sometimes be a very important question. Menstruation has been defined as the funeral ceremony of a dead ovum. Is the definition a correct one? If it is, then we may consider a woman who has just menstruated as being safe from conception until the next menstrual period. In other words, does conception take place just before or during or just after a menstrual period? I think that the evidence all points to its taking place just before the period. So that if the egg arrives in the uterus already fertilized, or is impregnated on arrival there, it lives and there is no funeral. But if it is not impregnated it does not become attached to the nest prepared for it but dies and the lining membrane comes away generally in the form of liquid debris, but sometimes as an entire cast of the uterine cavity, as was shown by Dr. Allan at a recent meeting of the Medical Society.

Another point arising from this is suggested by a series of letters and articles in