NOT "PONS," BUT "PONTES ASINORUM," PERHAPS.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Your correspondent, "W. L. S.," assumes too much in saying that collegians "universally" would recognize the Pythagorean problem as the one known in college parlance as the "Pons Asinorum." When I was at Yale, forty years ago, it was the fifth proposition, first book, of Euclid, that was so-called. I well remember having an old second-hand Euclid, which had come down through an indefinite number of predecessors, who had travelled over that bridge; and some one of them had distinctly labelled this proposition "Pons Asinorum," perhaps having come to grief on it himself. It is not (as your correspondent says) a difficult proposition; but, as it is the first that requires the exercise of any mathematical combination beyond the most rudimentary, it is merely a test of the utter lack of such ability. Hence its name, implying that only the most stupid would stumble in solving it. At least this was my interpretation after finding it very simple. Pythagoras is said to have died of joy in discovering it. There may be considerable doubt about this latter fact historically, but there can be none whatever about this fact that a good many other than "asses" have rejoiced in escaping a "flunk" mark on his proposition.   W.

    University Club, New-York, Dec. 23, 1890.