

CORRESPONDENCE.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS.

To the Editor of the *Mathematical Gazette*.

SIR,—The inclusion in your now abolished Pillory of questions which caused hardship to scholarship candidates on account of misprints or mistakes and of questions which exercised an injurious influence on Sixth-form teaching was obviously beneficial. Might it not be even more valuable to award stars to questions at the other end of the scale?

Scholarship papers must contain a large number of bread-and-butter questions, but should also contain some which test flair, insight and originality, no doubt suitable questions of this type are not easy to devise.

May I submit for the first award of a star the following problem taken from the Trinity Group examination, December 9, 1941, for entrance scholarships at Cambridge?

“Five points in a plane are given, no three of them lying on a straight line. Prove that at least one of the quadrangles determined by a set of four out of the five points is convex.”

It is unlikely that any candidate will have tackled previously a question of precisely this type; it therefore forms an excellent test of the ability of a candidate to think for himself. The fact that there may be some doubt as to what fundamental assumptions can be made is irrelevant because presumably the credit given by the examiner will depend on how the candidate sets out his assumptions and then develops his argument.

Both useful and interesting results might be obtained if you would ask for other recommendations for the award of a star.

CLEMENT V DURELL.

TERMINOLOGY.

To the Editor of the *Mathematical Gazette*.

SIR,—With reference to R. S. Williamson's request on p. 217 of the *Gazette* for October, 1941, my young pupils refer to the rhombus as the diamond-shaped figure, and I find that this is in keeping with the dictionary meaning of “diamond-shaped”

Yours, etc.,

CATHERINE W M. SHERRIFF.

1398. What strikes the French visitor is the quality of the instructors, the clarity of their explanations, the precision of their questions, their patience and indulgence. Also the empirical nature of their teaching. Little place is given to theory. I saw on a blackboard some drawings of machines, never a mathematical formula. These young Anglo-Saxons need to get a good grip on reality.—André Maurois, quoted in the *Times*, March 2, 1940. [Per Mr. G. A. Bull.]