

NOTES OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS.

AUSTRALIA, Queensland. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell reports on several plants observed in Queensland, among them the following: Near Kuranda a very tempting fruit, known as the finger cherry, is found. It is red, like a cherry, and is about the shape and size of a finger. It is said to be poisonous and occasionally to cause blindness in those who eat it. However, Mr. Wriede, the station master at Kuranda, says that he used to eat it freely without ill effects, and that the children are quite fond of it.

In the scrub near Kuranda we noticed trees bearing pods about the size and shape of a banana, but at least twice the diameter. Upon opening the pods they were found to contain huge beans that look very much like chestnuts. They have a leathery skin and the interior is white and not very hard, about the consistency of a nut. I tasted one of the beans, although I was told it was poisonous. It tasted very much like a nut but had no distinctive flavor. In spite of the poisonous nature of the bean the "black fellows" have learned to use it as food. They first roast the beans in hot ashes, then skin them and pound the white flesh into coarse flour. They fill a basket with this flour and place it in running water all night. In this way the poisonous principle is washed out.

The prickly pear in Australia has become such a nuisance that enormous sums are paid to get rid of it. Land is practically given away to persons who will undertake to clear it of prickly pear. Mr. Jones suggests that instead of spending money in the useless task of attempting to eradicate it, the Australians should make it of use and make a profit out of it. He has considered the question of manufacturing paper from it but the outlook is not encouraging. It has too much juice and not enough fiber. He thinks alcohol could be made from it, as it contains about 5 per cent reducing sugar. At all events he says a fortune awaits the man who can find a use for it.

FORMOSA, Taihoku. Mr. Takiya Kawakami, Sept. 8. Writes that he will send, by the end of the present year, the three varieties of sugar cane cultivated at the Formosa Sugar Experimental Station. Chinese names, Chiku-cha, An-cha and Ra-cha.

TRANSVAAL, Pretoria. Prof. J. Burtt-Davy, Sept. 6. Writes in regard to *Acacia robusta* (S.P.I. No. 28550), that it is a characteristic tree of the dry bush veld below 4,500 feet altitude, i.e., in the subtropical zone of the Transvaal. The wood is sometimes used for fence posts when the rarer and harder sorts, such as *Olea verrucosa*, are not available.