The Source of Abietene.

Abietene is the volatile product from the resin of some west American Pines, and is the counterpart of turpentine which is distilled from the resin of some other Pines, chiefly those in the southern United States. Abietene is a more volatile liquid than turpentine, but both are hydrocarbons, although belonging to different series. About the year 1878 samples of abietene were received in Philadelphia with the statement in one case that it was the product of Pinus Sabinianna, and in another case that it was derived from P. ponderosa. Of recent years it has come to be understood that the commercial source of abietene is P. Jeffreyi. As I had in my possession the barks from P. ponderosa and P. Sabinianna, it occurred to me that something might be learned by examining the volatile product of these two samples. They were accordingly distilled, and, while the yield was small, it was enough to get the characteristic orange odor of abietene in both cases. In another experiment the amount of volatile oil in the bark of P. ponderosa was determined to be about 0.2 per cent. The bark, therefore, would not be a profitable source of the oil. It is probable that both P. ponderosa and P. Sabinianna have yielded samples of this oil, although it may be possible that P. Jeffreyi is at present the commercial source. Some years ago Professor Wentzell, of San Francisco, detected oil of turpentine in the resin of P. ponderosa. It is possible that both oils occur in different parts of the tree. Unfortunately, the commercial production of abietene and its resin is in the hands of a medicine company, which is disposed to attribute to these products curative virtues which they do not possess. It is doubtful if abietene has any medicinal virtues superior to common oil of turpentine, or if the residual resin is superior to common resin.

Henry Trimple.

A river with its waterfalls and meadows, a lake, a hill, a cliff, a forest, ancient trees standing singly—it is objects like these which give beauty to a township and have a high use which dollars and cents never represent. They do more for education than hired teachers or preachers, and if the inhabitants of a town were wise they would cherish and preserve them. The town in Massachusetts with a noble oak wood, to which, if preserved, a century more, might make pilgrimages from all parts of the country. As in many countries precious metals belong to the Crown, so here more precious objects of nature beauty, like groves and river banks and mountain peaks, should belong to the public. —Thorndyke.
Foreign Correspondence.

London Letter.

RICHARDAS.—The new yellow-spotted species, Pentlandii and Elliotiana, have lately been conspicuous in good collections: the flowers are fully developed and admirably in keeping with the value of these two plants and are working up large stocks of them as rapidly as possible. They ripen seeds freely and they are also prolific in the development of supplementary buds on the tubers, which are a real means of multiplication. I lately saw about a thousand healthy young plants of R. Pentlandii in a nursery in the south, and in one of our London nurseries I was asked three guineas for a plant of this species in flower. The spathes vary in size according to the strength of the plant and the cultivation. I have seen this year spathes of both species as large as the largest R. African (Ethiopica) and of the richest yolk-of-egg yellow. The two differ in that the leaves of R. Elliotiana are spotted with white and the spathe is uniformly yellow, while in R. Pentlandii the leaves are unspotted and the spathe has a large blotch of black-purple at the base of the spadix. We have now, however, plants which combine the spotted and the unspotted spathe; possibly these are hybrids between the two. There are also forms of R. Pentlandii with spathes of a sulphur-yellow color. The hybridist also has been at work on these plants, crosses between them and R. Africana having been successfully made. My opinion these yellow Richardas are the most valuable additions that have been made to greenhouse plants in the last twenty years. The time will come, and shortly, too, when the flowers will be offered by the dozen by the market-growers, and they will be as conspicuous on the window-sills as the large white rhododendrons of the White Oak. The hybrid is now. Cultivators should bear in mind the fact that both R. Elliotiana and R. Pentlandii are warm-house plants.

HYBRID RHODODENDRON.—The most beautiful Rhododendrons in flower at Kew at the present time are first hybrids—that is, crosses between two distinct species—and probably the handsomest ever raised is one called Kewense. This is the offspring of R. Aucklandii and R. Hookeri, both tender Himalayan species, and yet the progeny is as hardy as R. Catawbiense; at any rate, it is perfectly hardy at Kew. Even when not in flower it is a handsome evergreen, but when laden with its large loose trusses of big bell-shaped bluish-white fragrant flowers it is a magnificent picture. It was raised at Kew and flowered for the first time about ten years ago. Grown in a cold greenhouse it is equally meritorious. The hybrids between R. Fortunii and R. Thomsontonia are also flowering beautifully now. These were raised by Mr. Lascombe about twenty years ago, and he presented a set of them to Kew before they flowered. They have since been named R. Lascombei, Mrs. T. Dyer and Frances T. Dyer. Mr. George Paul, of Cheshunt, has raised a number of hybrids between R. Fortunii and one of the popular varieties of the Catawbiense type. These hybrids are also flowering at Kew, and in distinctness and beauty they prove to be of quite exceptional merit. Much has been done with the Rhododendron, but a great deal more remains to be done before we have got to the limit of the capabilities of this great and varied genus. A very beautiful hardy species from China is now flowering for the first time at Kew, and we have seeds sown of several very remarkable species recently discovered in New Guinea. The potentialities of the Rhododendron as a garden plant are unexplored. It would be well for the plantsmen to give more attentions to the collection plants which formerly were in favor; on the contrary, he is glad to get rid of them, often burning them by the houseful to make room for Palm. Surely we may yet hope that a taste for interesting and choice indoor plants similar to that which stimulates the collector and cultivator of Orchids, alpine plants and hardy trees and shrubs will not be allowed to die out entirely. Indoor gardening needs reforming and bringing into harmony with the best style of outdoor gardening. This can be done by discarding, as far as possible, the florist and plant-stage and making the houses look less artificial than they are now. I am certain that the present style of greenhouse gardening is responsible for the lack of interest in it which is so evident in the horticulture of to-day. Two of the best proofs of this are in the preference visitors to Kew show for the tented greenhouse, whose flowers are all grown naturally in beds, and in the popularity of two showhouses in the nursery of Messrs. Veitch & Sons at Chelsea, one for Orchids and the other for greenhouse plants. In these there are no stages, the plants standing in natural groups in artificially arranged rock, water and cushions, etc.