A new edition of Dallimore and Jackson. The original edition in 1923 was conceived in a period of transition—at the end of a long period of intense interest in the cultivation of ornamental conifers, and at the beginning of a period in which the government's policy has been to promote actively the establishment of conifer plantations. Much of the unique flavour of this book stems from the attempt by the authors to meet needs of both arboriculturists and foresters *at that time*. However, it was not the "commentary" that established this work as the standard one on the Coniferae, but the taxonomic content. Taxonomic revision has been overdue for some time now and all interested in conifers will be grateful to Mr. Harrison for undertaking the task.*

The volume now has fifty slightly larger pages of smaller print as well as additional photographs and line drawings. The number of species, varieties, cultivars and hybrids recorded has increased by about one third. The material on *Podocarpus* has doubled and the collections in the uplands of central America have added much material in the genera *Pinus* and *Juniperus*. Relatively few of the really familiar names have changed; the Incense Cedar becomes *Calocedrus decurrens;* the Japanese larch, *Larix kaempferi;* the Californian Redwood, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

What I have called "the commentary" seems to have been revised rather haphazardly. There are now more up-to-date records of some of the famous trees in Britain. Experience in handling such relative newcomers as x *Cupressocyparis leylandii* is included. But no serious effort has been made to revise much of the commentary. The long out-of-date information on the age of the giant Californian Redwoods is simply repeated and no credit given to the present "title holder" as the oldest known living plant, the Bristle-cone Pine, *Pinus aristata*. The butt-rot of larch is still ascribed to "a species of *Polyporus*" although, for nearly twenty years now, it has been known to be caused by the fungus *Fomes annosus*. The autecological and silvicultural information, also, has received little attention and many out-of-date views are perpetuated. It should not be inferred from these criticisms that I think Mr. Harrison should have attempted to revise the whole of the commentary; it would be too formidable a task for one man. But I think he should have cut out such material and given us a smaller and less expensive volume.

A valuable part of most taxonomic works consists of the keys. Those of the older editions were particularly frustrating and it was pleasing to find that some of them had been considerably improved. An example of a key that has not been revised is that to *Picea*. The prime division is into the groups *Eupicea, Casicta* and *Omorika;* for many of the species concerned, you cannot tell which your specimen refers to unless it has mature cones. The key to genera cultivated in the British Isles is that developed for "The Identification of Conifers" by Jackson.

The volume is pleasantly designed and well produced, though I would like to have seen a change in the format of the keys, with the most reliable diagnostic characters italicized. The arrangement is now alphabetical by genera, a sensible one considering the varied opinions as to what constitutes a family in the Coniferae. But why then put the genus in small italics and its family in large capitals? The wrong name catches the eye each time and is a continual minor irritation. There were two mistakes that I noticed—the omission of one set of key section letters on page 238 and a wrong generic title to page 578.

The taxonomic revision ensures that this will remain the standard reference work on the Coniferae for many years to come. It is just a pity that full advantage was not taken of the opportunity to sift out the obsolete comment and tailor the volume more closely to present-day needs.

J. E. COUSENS

* A Handbook of the Coniferae and Ginkgoaceae by W. Dallimore and A. B. Jackson. 4th Edition, revised by S. G. Harrison. London. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd. 1966. xx, 729 pp. Price £8 .8.0.