

THE STATUS OF *URGINEA EPIGEA*

In his revision of the bulbous Liliaceae of South Africa Jessop (1977) sank *Urginea* under *Drimia*. While I agree that some species are better placed with the *Drimia* species of Jacquin, there is a number of others that I prefer to retain in *Urginea*, namely those with small, white, stellate flowers and spreading stamens which Jacquin considered to belong to *Anthericum*. In his revision, Jessop (1977) erred in placing *Urginea epigea* R. A. Dyer as a synonym of *Drimia altissima* (L.f.) Ker Gawl. from the Cape. While the latter is best placed in *Drimia*, Dyer's species is an *Urginea*, closely related to *U. micrantha* (A. Rich.) Solms-Laub. (1867) from tropical east Africa, first described as *Scilla micrantha* A. Rich. in Tent. Fl. Abyss.: 2: 328 (1843).

There is also the taxonomic value of the nature of the bulbs to be considered. In the gregarious species *Urginea epigea*, the bulbs consist of loose scales and grow above ground, whereas apparently the majority of plants identified as *U. micrantha*, have compact hypogean bulbs and are usually solitary. They are widely distributed in southern to tropical Africa, whereas *U. epigea* has so far only been recorded from the Transvaal and South West Africa. From herbarium sheets with incomplete material and meagre notes one cannot distinguish between these two taxa. This problem requires further study in the field.

A. AMELIA OBERMEYER