

In the coastal regions of Somalia — semi-desert country except along the Juba River and along the Webi Shebelli, — the tall *Euphorbia robecchii* Pax (Fig. 3) abounds and dominates the otherwise stunted xerophytic tree growth. From its soft, odourless timber, the crates for shipping the bananas from huge plantations run by the Italians along the banks of the two rivers, are made.

*E. robecchi* has a particularly acrid and obnoxious latex which — even in the minutest quantities — causes virulent inflammation of the mucous membranes and a drop of which raises blisters on the skin.

Before the tree is cut, a fire is built around the base which scorches the bark and destroys the latex. The trees are then felled, the branches chopped off and left behind to be used for singing the latex of other trees.

The logs are then taken by lorry to the sawmill in Chisimaio (Fig. 4) whence the bananas are shipped to Italy, cut up into slats and made into frames for the crates (Fig. 5). The wood has to be used green, when it is tough and resilient. Once dry, it becomes brittle and loses most of its strength, so that the crates can be used for one single voyage only.

Already, the timber has to travel many miles to the factory, the neighbourhood having been thoroughly cut out, but *E. robecchi* is exceedingly common over a great portion of British and Italian Somaliland, in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya, it extends South into the Tsavo National Park and further South into Northern Tanganyika where the most Southernly limit seems to be near Mkomasi.

Peter R. O. Bally,  
Botanist,  
Coryndon Museum, Nov. 1953.  
Photographs by the author.

#### EXPLANATION OF FIGURES.

- (1) *Euphorbia abyssinica* Gmel. n'r Nefasit, Eritrea.
- (2) *Euphorbia robecchii* Pax n'r Maungu, Tsavo National Park.
- (3) logs of *E. robecchii* at the sawmill in Chisimaio.
- (4) frames for banana crates, stacked at the sawmill, Chisimaio.

### OBITUARY

AIR-VICE MARSHALL SIR ROBERT BROOKE-POPHAM

The Society is grieved to hear of the death of Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.F.C. During Sir Robert's stay in Kenya as Governor he was a Patron of the Society. Although war broke out during his stay in the Colony with all its complications and anxiety, Sir Robert was interested in the affairs and well-being of the Society.

H. Copley.