

How Hornby Trains are Made

By "Tommy Dodd"

RECENTLY I paid one of my periodical visits to Meccanoland, the wonderful factory in Binns Road, Liverpool, that is known to boys of all ages all over the world as the place where Meccano parts and Hornby Trains are made. Many fortunate boys have visited the factory, and have had the pleasure of seeing the wonderful Train Room, in which thousands of Hornby Train Sets are produced every year, but for the benefit of those who are unable to come to Liverpool for this purpose, I may say that this has a floor space of more than 15,000 sq. ft. It is splendidly lighted, alternate sections of the roof being made of glass, and this helps greatly in ensuring good workmanship.

I do not suppose that many young visitors ever have time to notice this, however, for immediately on entering their attention is drawn to the bewildering array of Locomotives, Coaches, Wagons, Rails, Stations, Engine Sheds, Signals and countless other accessories that are being rapidly put together by busy fingers. The vast room is occupied by an army of workpeople, who deftly fit together parts made in other sections of the factory and under their hands the finished products are fashioned and packed into the familiar boxes, the sight of which has gladdened the hearts of so many boys.

Down the centre of the great factory runs a wide corridor on each side of which are the Tool Rooms, Press Shops, Spraying Departments, etc., in which the parts necessary to build up Hornby Trains are made. Visitors pass down this corridor and suddenly emerge into the centre of the busy Train Room itself. I have often entered it in this manner, but at every visit I am again struck by the almost bewildering variety of the work carried on in it. Although everybody is very busy, nobody is rushing about in a furious manner, or becoming wildly excited, because each knows the work that is to be done and carries on with it in a quiet and efficient manner.

The parts required are brought into the room by means of electric trucks and they pass along the working benches on conveyors that travel down the centres. In order to have some part added, each locomotive, coach, or wagon in process of building is lifted off the conveyor, and when the task is finished it is immediately replaced to be carried along to the point where the next

operation is to be made. The assembly is complete when the end of the conveyor is reached, and the newly-built product is inspected, packed into its box and removed into the stores.

To watch a well-known Hornby Train accessory being assembled in this manner is a very fascinating occupation, and I was not surprised to learn that the guides who escort visitors round the factory do not find it easy to persuade their young friends to leave. Most of these would willingly spend an entire day simply watching these

fascinating operations. For instance, the assembly of an Engine Shed arouses great interest in all visitors, whether young or old. They watch with close attention the deft manner in which the walls and ends of the structure are fitted together by means of the lugs

provided for the purpose. Then follows the roof. This is placed in a wooden jig in order to enable it to be fitted correctly and in the most expeditious manner, and finally the floor of the shed is added.

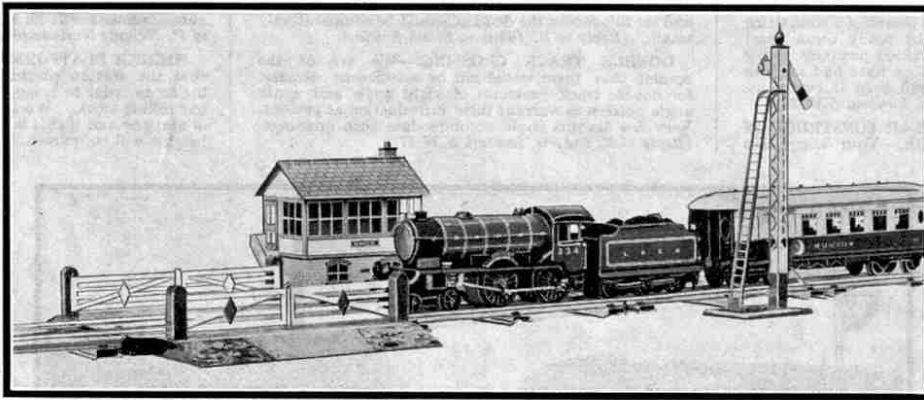
On tearing myself away from the conveyor benches on which Engine Sheds were being made, my attention was caught by a faint noise overhead. This I had not noticed previously and on glancing upward to discover the cause, I found that above my head was a conveyor belt that ran right across the room. On enquiry I found

that this is used for carrying rails from the place in which they are made to that in which they are packed in Hornby Train Sets.

I traced the conveyor back to the place from which it started and found myself at the rail assembly

tables. There I was surprised by the speed at which the lengths of complete rail were built up. This, of course, is the result of careful organisation. The rails themselves are made in a separate part of the factory. I have often watched their manufacture from large sheets of tin plate and have marvelled at the rapidity with which the sheets are cut into strips of the required size by one machine and stamped into rails in one operation by a second. A conveyor belt delivers them to packers, or, if they are to be curved, carries them to the revolving wheels of the machines that "mangle" them into correct shape. Both straight and curved rails are then taken to the Train Room by an electric truck.

In the second stage of manufacture the rails travel as



Pullman train drawn by a Hornby No. 2 Special Locomotive approaching a level crossing.



Hornby No. 1 Goods Set, the construction of which requires no less than 1,583 operations.