

How to Get More Fun from your Hornby Railway

IV.—MAKING MINIATURE SCENERY

THE aim of the really keen model railway enthusiast is to make his railway as far as possible a miniature reproduction of the real thing. The first and most important point is to develop a layout that can be operated on actual railway principles. Even when this has been done, however, and when the line is working realistically to timetable there still remain great possibilities in the way of providing the layout with realistic surroundings.

It is unfortunately true that little can be done in this direction with a track that has to be laid down on the floor of a room and subsequently must be taken up again completely. In the case of a permanent or even a semi-permanent track such as may be laid down in an attic or other spare room, or perhaps in an outhouse, the position is quite different. With such layouts it is quite possible to provide a background and scenery that will improve the attractiveness of the layout to an enormous extent. Many model railway owners appear to be under the impression that the making of suitable railway scenery is a difficult task and only practicable for those with artistic ability. This is a great mistake, however, and the object of this article is to show by what simple means quite realistic effects may be obtained.

First of all from an onlooker's point of view a perfectly flat model railway never looks as realistic as one that is laid in hilly surroundings. It is quite true that inclines of any steepness are not practicable with clockwork locomotives but little difficulty should be experienced with slight inclines. Even if no inclines at all were possible the difficulty is not insurmountable. As a matter of fact a miniature railway that is level or almost level may be made to appear distinctly undulating. This effect is produced by careful distribution of embankments and cuttings and a general arrangement of scenery so as to produce the effect of hilly country.

How to Make Embankments

It is quite a simple matter to make a really effective embankment. A framework should first of all be arranged to support the lines, which should be nailed to a piece of board or a plank to ensure their steadiness. This board should be fixed on top of the embankment framework. The next step is to cover the sides of the framework with pieces of old felting, brushed up the wrong way with a stiff brush so as to make it rough. The embankment will then be ready to be painted over, either with a thin layer of green paint to represent grass, or with brown paint, to give the effect of soil. An occasional patch of a lighter brown, or perhaps a delicate touch of red here and there, will make the finished work look as though it consists of soil containing clay.

Another very effective method of finishing off an embankment side is by soaking brown paper in a thin solution of glue and warm water. The paper should be taken out, and after the superfluous liquid has been drained off, it should be attached to the framework and worked up into any desired shape, which it will retain when dry. The embankment is then ready to be sprinkled over with gravel or with bits of rock and stone.

The most popular method of covering over tunnels is very similar to that employed in making embankments, and some very realistic results have been obtained in this direction by numbers of Hornby Train owners. We reproduce here an illustration showing a tunnel and also a piece of realistic scenery, to give beginners some idea of what to aim at when they are about to commence

work on a scenic layout. The tunnel in question was made by first of all designing the entrances on cardboard and then cutting them out. The round roofs were then manufactured out of blackened cardboard and stuck in position inside. When this had been done a heap of old boxes and crumpled cardboard was placed on top and brown paper soaked in paste was spread over the whole. Finally an excellent effect was obtained by painting the paper to imitate rough rock.

Cuttings are quite a simple matter to make, and are, to all intents and purposes, embankments "inside out." As long as the same method is employed, no difficulty should be experienced in making very realistic cuttings.

Various Methods of "Growing" Miniature Fields

Miniature fields should present no difficulties to the model railway builder. The recognised method of "growing" a field for a model railway is to obtain a piece of cheap felt which should be brushed up the wrong way by means of a stiff brush and then given a coat of green paint. In order to obtain the best effect, the paint should not be laid on too thickly and uniform but should be rather patchy to give the effect of the grass being thicker in some places than in others.

Another very popular plan for making a field is to obtain some ordinary surgical lint. This is cut into the required shape for the field and is immersed in a green dye. After the lint is dried and brushed up, the effect is quite astonishing.

Still another way of creating a model meadow is by obtaining some fine sawdust. This is put into

a basin, and green water paint, or dye, is poured in. The whole is stirred thoroughly, the water is drained off, and the sawdust is then laid out on a sheet of paper and put in the oven to dry. The area to be converted into a field is then glued or Seccotined over and the dried green sawdust is sprinkled lavishly on top. A light brush, or duster, will remove all superfluous "grass," and the field will be quite ready for fattening up model cattle!

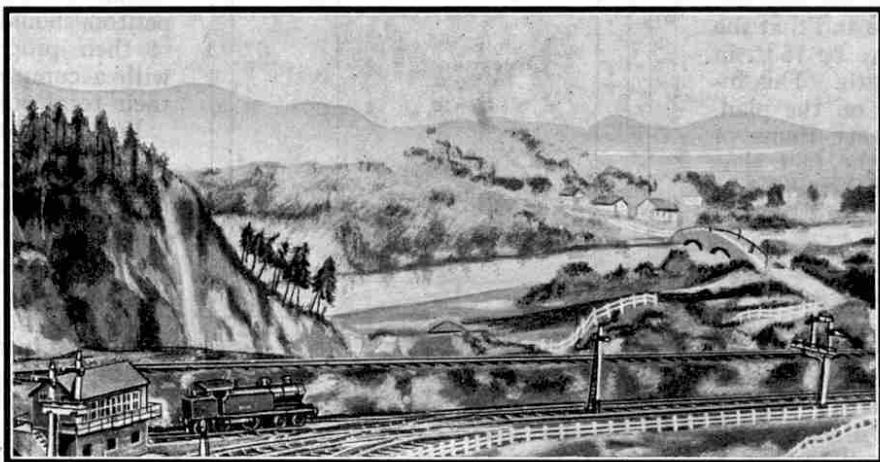
Very often a field of this kind may be relieved by a miniature pond, and the best way of making one of these is undoubtedly to cut out a hole in the field and to place an old piece of mirror underneath. This will look remarkably like a pond and if the banks look rather sharp and unrealistic, these can be smoothed off by the use of Plasticine.

Trees, Shrubs, and the Manufacture of Forests

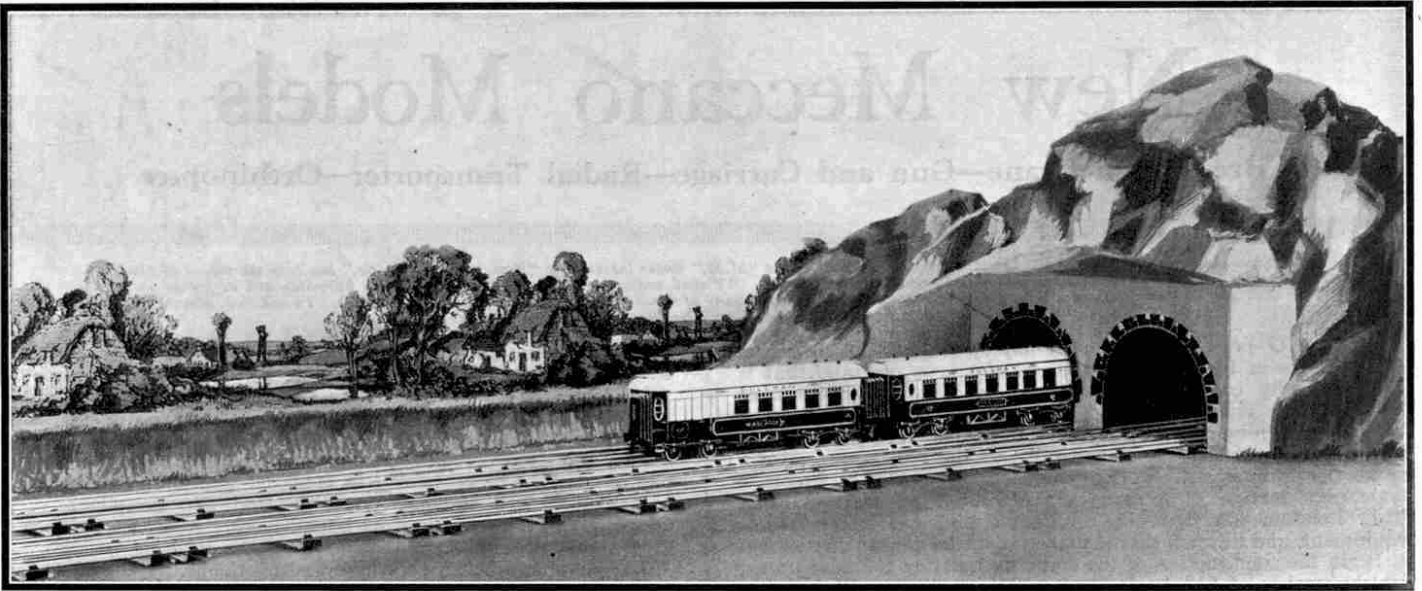
The tasteful distribution of trees will enhance the appearance of any model line-side to a great degree, and if the engineer has sufficient patience to undertake the manufacture of a forest, he will be well repaid for his trouble. Trees may be made from suitable twigs. Small bits of green moss, obtainable from any florist, are then glued on to the "branches" to represent the leaves. Another method of making foliage for trees is to obtain some green felt or other green woolly material, and to grate this to fluff by means of an old nutmeg grater. The fluff should be stuck to the twigs to represent leaves, and the result obtained will be found to be quite effective.

Fences for Lineside and Background Scenery

Very often the addition of a small fence running up and down hills in the background will improve the general appearance of the scenery around a model layout immensely. There are



Our illustration shows a very attractive piece of scenery arranged round a model railway layout. Readers will be interested to learn that all the landscape effects were painted directly on to the wall of the room occupied by the railway



The use of wallpaper frieze as scenery on a model railway is illustrated here. In order to obtain the realistic sky effect the wall of the room was first of all distempred in light sky blue. The sky that already existed on the frieze was then cut away and the remainder of the frieze pasted in position. The embankment, consisting of felt treated as explained in this article, was then laid down to the line-side

various methods employed for making fences but the following two are probably the most practicable.

For the construction of a fence that is close to the railway lines, match-sticks may be used, securely planted in small holes that may be made in the baseboard by means of a gimlet. The matches should be connected together by cotton, and the small fence should then receive a light coating of some dark coloured paint. For fences in the more distant background, old gramophone needles placed at regular intervals and bound together with cotton are very useful. These should also be coloured over with a thin layer of paint, and the result is really most attractive.

The Equipment of a Large Station

In addition to making use of the standard Hornby Railway Stations many model railway owners like to make for themselves a terminal station on as big a scale as circumstances will permit. Such a station, even if made accurately and neatly to scale looks very dead and unrealistic until certain finishing touches are provided.

The first matter for consideration is the platform surface. In actual railway practice a platform surface, apart from the paved portions, is covered with asphalt or tar. The best method of obtaining the "asphalt" effect is to varnish over the model platform with some cheap black enamel, and when it is beginning to dry to sprinkle fine emery or pumice powder over it. In order to finish-off a platform the edges should be coloured with a slaty-gray paint to represent the flagstones that are usually found as an edging to the platforms in an actual station.

Then there are the buildings to be considered. Station buildings are usually manufactured from wood, but in many cases are left unpainted and consequently do not look anything like as effective as they might do. All buildings should be finished off by painting bricks on the walls. In order to get a really good brick wall effect, first paint the wall over with brick-red flat paint. Then obtain some Indian ink and rule on the bricks. When finished, the wall will be all that can be desired.

Cottages and houses around the station or along the line-side may be pebble-dashed quite successfully. Glue the surface of the walls and sprinkle coarse sand all over them. When this has been done, coat them over with a thin layer of flat paint, either white, grey or brown, to suit the taste of the "householder."

The use of home-made Papier-mache

Papier-mache comes in extremely useful for scenery work on a model railway. Embankments and cuttings may be made from it, and tunnels may be covered over with it. The simplest way to make papier-mache at home is to obtain some old newspapers, tear them into small pieces and boil them in water in an old pan. The paper eventually will become very soft and pulpy. At this stage the water should be strained off and water paint should then be added, the colour being selected to suit the purpose in mind. A little glue or size should be added to enable the papier-mache to set hard when it is being laid out in position.

The mixture is then ready for use and may be shaped as

and where required on the railway. Papier-mache must be left approximately three weeks to dry, but when dry it will be extremely hard and will stand any amount of knocking about. Plaster is very often used instead of papier-mache, but the objection to plaster is that it has a nasty habit of cracking when holes are drilled in it.

Asbestos Sheets for Rock Cuttings

Asbestos sheets often come in very handy in model railway construction. The track may be laid on asbestos sheets if required, but there are one or two points that must be carefully noted before setting to work with this material.

The objection to asbestos sheets is that they are very brittle and snap easily unless handled carefully. Nails should on no account be driven into an asbestos sheet without holes having first been drilled for them. Another point that should be remembered is that it is not advisable to saw too near the edge of a sheet. Platforms may be made from asbestos sheeting and deep cuttings may be represented in a very true-to-life manner by placing a piece of sheeting on each side of the track and colouring it over with flat grey paint. The appearance is exactly the same as a deep cutting in rock.

Ballasting a Model Track Realistically

Ballasting is a subject that is dealt with in almost any article on model railways and no doubt many Hornby enthusiasts are well experienced in the art of ballasting a model track realistically. The ingredients to use are granite chips, or "chicken grit." The chips may be laid down round the sleepers of the track loosely if desired, but some enthusiasts prefer to mix them with glue so as to avoid the rail bed spreading. It is a good plan to lay felt under the sleepers of the rails and then to spread the ballast round up to the level of the top of the sleepers. The smoothness of the running of trains on tracks so treated will be noticeable immediately.

As practically all model railway scenic effects have to be painted, a few words of advice as regards the kind of paint to use will not be out of place here.

For rough jobs such as the colouring of baseboards and similar large surfaces, any cheap brand of stain can be used. On the other hand, for jobs such as the painting of trees, fields and the like, a finer brand of flat oil paint comes in very useful. If possible, however, the best type of colour to use on this kind of work is Reeves' Showcard Paint. This is not a transparent colour similar to those that are supplied in artists' water-colour boxes, but is opaque and, in addition, has the advantage of drying quickly. For fine work, such as the painting of details on model buildings, etc., nothing but first-class enamel should be used.

During painting a great deal of patience must be exercised. More than one good piece of work has been spoilt through being touched before it has dried properly. If two coats of paint are required, the first should be allowed to dry thoroughly before the second is applied.