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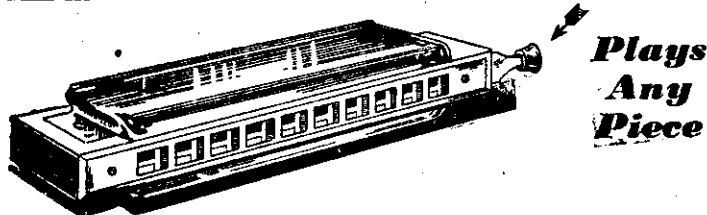
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BOOKS

On and Off the Rails

MODERN RAILWAYS, by Cecil J. Allen;
Faber and Faber, English price 45/-.

(Reviewed by A. N. Palmer)

CECIL J. ALLEN will need no introduction to the railway enthusiasts of New Zealand. For nearly 50 years he has been a prominent figure in British railway circles, and his articles in *The Railway Magazine* have established him as one of the world's leading authorities on locomotive performance. Revered by many as the doyen of railway writers in the semi-technical field, Allen has not confined his activities to magazine articles. He is a lecturer and broadcaster on railway subjects, and has several books to his credit, including the classic *Switzerland's Amazing Railways*.

Modern Railways, his latest venture, is an attempt to present and explain railroading in a form easily digested by the non-technical reader. The publishers claim that *Modern Railways* is "one of the most comprehensive reviews of railway equipment and operation ever assembled in a single volume." In my opinion the book falls short of its objective for the simple reason—stated by the publishers themselves—that no other organisation covers so wide a field of technical interest as the railway. Not even a writer as accomplished as Cecil J. Allen can pour a quart into a pint pot.

Allen writes, as is to be expected, mainly about developments on British railways. He also discusses many aspects of railroading in Europe, North America, and South Africa. But, on the other hand, he appears indifferent to happenings on many important railway systems in other countries. I cannot escape the feeling that much of the material has been drawn from that vintage publication *Railway Wonders of the World*, of which Allen was consulting editor. And it is rather disturbing to find, in a book which will undoubtedly be accepted as a standard reference work, evidence of hasty writing without adequate research.

Perhaps this state of affairs is best illustrated by one of the few references to the New Zealand Railways. In one paragraph dealing with the Rimutaka tunnel and deviation there are no fewer than four errors. Elsewhere, in mentioning the Rimutaka Incline, he describes the Fell locomotives as having had "a third cylinder, between the frames, which drove two vertical shafts" to actuate the horizontal gripping wheels. To say the least this must have been a slip of the pen, for it is difficult to imagine how a single piston could be arranged to drive two crankshafts rotating in opposite directions. The Fell locomotives, it may be mentioned, had two "inside" cylinders. Incidentally, Allen is an associate of the Institution of Locomotive Engineers.

Another bad slip was the implication that Charles Vignoles, of England, invented the flat-bottomed rail that is now favoured by most of the world's railways. It is common enough knowledge among railway historians that this form of rail was designed in 1830 by an American, Col. Robert L. Stevens, engineer to the Camden and Amboy Railroad. Vignoles merely re-invented it in 1836.

Something I cannot pass over is Allen's assertion that the South African

Railways represent the maximum development possible on the 3ft 6in. gauge, and that the speed of trains on the 3ft 6in. gauge is limited to 60 m.p.h. Ponderous locomotives do not themselves prove that the limit of development has been reached on the narrow gauge. He appears to be unaware that the Japanese National Railways, famed for the fantastic volume of traffic they handle on 3ft 6in.-gauge tracks, have conducted trials with electric trains at speeds up to 86 m.p.h. Japan's crack express train, the Kodama, operates at speeds in the vicinity of 70 m.p.h., and it seems that J.N.R. engineers have set their sights on a target of over 90 m.p.h. Even in New Zealand 60 miles an hour is now regarded as commonplace on track laid with heavy rail. As long ago as 1940 a diesel railcar was tested at speeds up to 78 m.p.h. in the South Island, and express trains in Canterbury have been known to top the seventy mark.

Yet another example of Cecil J. Allen's unfamiliarity with railway operations in other lands is his reference to the French T.I.A. (*Traitement Intégrale Armand*) system of "blowing-down" the water in steam-locomotive boilers to reduce scale formation and to eject sludge. He expresses surprise that so beneficial a system has not been introduced elsewhere. To put the record straight, it must be mentioned that the New Zealand Railways have been using T.I.A. blow-down equipment for several years.

Apart from the shortcomings I have commented on, and others that have not been mentioned, *Modern Railways* is well written and handsomely produced, and has an extensive range of excellent half-tone illustrations. For the New Zealand railway enthusiast who requires a handy reference to some aspects of present-day railroading, it should prove a useful addition to the bookshelf.

MAN OF ACTION

NINE LIVES, by Alan C. Deere; Hodder & Stoughton, English price 15/-.

GROUP Captain Alan Deere, D.S.O., O.B.E., D.F.C., was the most successful New Zealand fighter ace of World War II. He is officially credited with 22 enemy aircraft destroyed, 10 probables, and 18 damaged. Unlike the inflated



ALAN DEERE
One more "probable"

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 16, 1959.