

## DAMALS, DAS MAGAZIN FÜR GESCHICHTE UND KULTUR

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The current February 2009 issue of *Damals*, a German monthly magazine making history come alive, contains an informative and well-written article on the collapse of the Tay Bridge, which led to the tragic deaths of seventy-five passengers on board the Edinburgh Express on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1879. The newly constructed Tay Bridge, spanning the Firth of Tay and regarded as an architectural wonder of the world (at the time it was the longest bridge ever built), was to be stigmatized as the “Titanic” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Man’s ability to overcome the forces of nature was immediately called into question. Theodor Fontane’s moving ballad, “Die Brück’ am Tay” (“The Tay Bridge”) is also included in the article. In Fontane’s ballad, Shakespearian witches plot the collapse of the bridge and suggest the senselessness of man’s quest for industrial progress in the Age of the Steam Engine. The ballad, composed and published shortly after the highly publicized disaster, is one of Fontane’s most important ballads dealing with 19<sup>th</sup> century technology. In this sense, as well as structurally, it and the ballad “John Maynard” are sometimes referred to as “twin ballads.” Markus Hehl, the author of the article with the stirring title “**Inferno in der Hexenküche**” (“Inferno in the Witches’ Kitchen”) has provided excellent research and illustrations. The dramatic attempt to rescue survivors (there were none) during the night of the tragedy is portrayed below.

For *damals* online, cf. [www.damals.de](http://www.damals.de)

