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THEODOR FONTANE'S POEM ON THE TAY BRIDGE DISASTER.

Among many striking poems written by Theodor Fontane, the German poet and author, whose death has just occurred*, not the least noteworthy is one entitled *Die Brück' am Tay*. A translation of it by Mr. A. H. Millar is appended: —

THE TAY BRIDGE—28th DECEMBER 1879

From the German of Theodor Fontane.

“When shall we three meet again?”—

At the seventh hour, on the Bridge, and then
By the central pier.

I'll quench the flame
Of light and life!

From the North I came [sic]!
And I from the South!

And I from the sea!
And with linked hands we will strain, and so
The wavering Bridge to the depths shall go!
And the train which is speeding along its way
At the seventh hour?

Shall be lost for aye!
Down with it!

Vain are the iron bands
Of the structure raised by men's weak hands!

In the watch-tower on the northern side
The windows looked out on the foaming tide,
And the pointsman, restless and doubting, stood
Gazing anxiously over the turbulent flood;
Peering and straining that light to see
Which would tell of the train rushing speedily,
As if shouting—“I come, 'tis my lamp, 'tis my
form,
Heedless of darkness and reckless of storm!”

And the father said—“I see a light
On the further shore, glowing clearly bright.
Now, mother, forget your sorrowful dream!
Our Johnnie comes! 'Tis the steady gleam
Of the engine's lamp. Let our answer be
The light from our brilliant Christmas-tree!
His coming is doubly welcome this year.
And within a brief space we shall have him here!”

Ay, 'twas the train. From the southern bank
It dashed through the storm with clang and with
clack.

And Johnnie spake:—“'Tis our Bridge, I know;

But why do we quiver and tremble so?
More fuel, more steam! 'gainst the storm we
 strain,

But as conquerors still in the strife we'll remain.
With a rattle and ringing rush we shall be
The victors o'er tempest, and time, and sea!

“The Bridge is our pride! With laughter I
 think

On the days when we journeyed from brink to brink
Of the river, within our wretched boat,
Crazy, outworn, scarce fit to float.
Yet many a weary Christmas night
Have I spent on board, and watched the light
High up in our home, for I well could see
That a hearty welcome awaited me!”

In the cabin on the northern side
The windows looked over the foaming tide;
And the signalman, restless and doubtful, stood
Gazing anxiously out on the raging flood.
Then the wild wind's wrath became fierce and
 keen,
And a flash like a thunder-bolt was seen;
It glowed o'er the water with glory bright,
Then sank 'neath the waves—and all was Night!

“When shall we three meet again?”
At midnight on the mountain-chain,
On the lonely moor, by the wizard-tree—
 I come.

 And I.

 The Mystic Three.

 I call.

 I the Name.

 And I call, Woe!

 Hei!

 We shall rend each roof in two,

Vain are the bolts, the bars, the bands
In the loftiest works of men's weak hands!

**Fontane died on September 20, 1898, two days before publication of Mr. Millar's translation.*