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LESSONS OF A GREAT DISASTER.

The North German Lloyd steamship Elbe, bound from Bremen for New York, was sunk in a collision with a small steamer fifty miles off Lowestoft, England.

But twenty survivors escaped in one of the boats. All the other passengers and crew, numbering about 334 souls, were lost.

Chief Engineer Neussell, who was saved, says the stem of the steamer which rammed the Elbe struck her about 150 feet forward of the rudder, or just abaft the engine room.

Mr. Keller, the London manager of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, says:

"The Elbe was struck right on a bulkhead partition, so that both the watertight compartments which it divided were instantly filled."

There was no longitudinal bulkhead. The shock and crash of the collision aroused everybody. The steerage was in a panic in a moment, and men, women and children, half dressed, or in their night clothes, came crowding up the companionways to the deck.

As the other steamer backed off and drew her stem out of the great cut made in the side of the Elbe, the latter careened over to port and began to settle by the stern. Three boats on the port side were lowered, but all except one were lost.

Among the lessons derivable from this disaster, we may note the inadequacy of the present means of saving life. The Elbe was provided with ten life-boats, besides life-rafts and collapsible boats.

The weakest spot in nearly all steamers appears to be at or near amidships. A blow near this point has almost always proved fatal. Knowing this weakness, cannot some ingenious mind discover a remedy?

The Elbe was built in 1881 by the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, of Glasgow, better known as the Elder Company. She was the first express steamer built for the North German Lloyd Steamship Company.

She had ten standing life-boats, six collapsing, or folding, life-boats, three life-rafts, and was divided into nine water-tight compartments.

Her dimensions were: Gross tonnage, 4,510 tons; length over all, 418 feet; width of beam, 44 feet; depth, 35 feet.

THE HEAVENS IN FEBRUARY.

An excellent opportunity to see the shy planet Mercury is offered this month. Since the astronomers watched it crossing the sun's face last November, Mercury has passed around the farther side of the sun and is now preparing to swing once more into line between the solar orb and the earth.

recognizable as the more northerly of the two, the distance separating them being about three degrees.

It will be interesting to remember when looking at Mercury on this occasion that the planet is, at the time, close to its perihelion point or nearest approach to the sun.

It will receive (shall we say enjoy?) a degree of heat ten times as intense as that which the sun pours upon the earth, and yet toward the end of last December the solar heat on Mercury was less than half as great as it will be on February 9.

Every lover of the stars will rejoice at the return of Venus to the western sky. During the month she will gradually draw away from the sun and brighten a little, but she is still far in the distant part of her orbit and the real glory of her re-entry as the queen of the evening is a spectacle reserved for the spring.

Mars remains in Aries during the first half of the month. In the latter half his eastward motion will carry him over into Taurus and he will swing slowly past the Pleiades on their southern side.

But while Mars fades, Jupiter continues a feast for the eyes of all those happy people who know the joys of the telescope. His marvelous panorama of cloud belts and changing spots, the delicate blue of his poles, and the gorgeous decoration of white and ruddy vapors that encircles his vast equator, are sights of another world that no thoughtful person should miss seeing.

I give, as heretofore, two or three dates on which the shadows of some of Jupiter's satellites can be seen on his disk, eastern standard time:

February 10, at 7:41 P. M., satellite I will pass upon the disk; its shadow will follow at 8:45, and the latter will be half way across about 9:55.

Saturn is in Libra, some 15° or 16° directly east of the bright star Spica. It cannot be seen before midnight. The same is true of Uranus, which remains near the fourth magnitude star Iota in Libra.

The opening of the month finds the moon in Aries, in which constellation it reaches first quarter on the 2d, at a quarter past seven o'clock in the evening. The moon fulls in Leo, near the star Regulus, on the 9th, a little after midday, and attains last quarter in Libra at 8 A. M. on the 15th.

As the moon runs through the circle of the Zodiac she will in turn pay her respects to the various planets encountered on her way. At midnight on the 4th she will meet Neptune; at 10 P. M. on the 5th she will pass Jupiter, and at 10:36 P. M. on the 14th Saturn will bask in her rays.

Antidote for Cyanide Poisoning.

Cobalt nitrate is found by Dr. Johann Antal, a chemist of Hungary, to be an antidote to prussic acid and cyanide poisoning. First he tried the cobalt on animals, and then, presumably at different times, on forty living persons who had been accidentally poisoned by prussic acid, and in all cases the results are reported to have been satisfactory.