

Washington Feb. 28  
[1844]

A most awful calamity has  
this moment transpired & overspread  
this city gloom - The steam ship  
of war Princeton has been here for  
two weeks past - She is mounted upon  
her two immense wrought iron cannon  
which carry a ball of over 200 lbs &  
it requires for a charge between 30 & 40  
lbs. of powder - The week before last  
she was visited by the President, & heads  
of departments, military & naval officers  
& the military & naval committees of the  
two houses & the guns were repeatedly fired.  
Last week she was visited by the members  
of the two houses generally & they witnessed  
also the operation of the vessel & the guns.  
This day a party, consisting of gentlemen  
with their ladies, visited the ship & one  
of those large guns exploded & spread  
destruction & death around it - Mr. W. W. Phelps  
Secretary of State - Gov. Gilman, Secretary of  
the Navy - Commodore Knowen - Colonel  
Gardner & Virgil Maxey of Maryland & five  
seaman were killed, Capt. Stockton who  
commanded the ship is injured, but it is  
thought to be only by the concussion and