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# SUNBURY AMERICAN.

AND SHAMOKIN JOURNAL.

Absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of Republics, from which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism.—JEFFERSON.

By Masser & Eelsey.

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## DREADFUL CALAMITY!! AND LOSS OF LIFE ON BOARD THE PRINCETON.

SIX PERSONS KILLED.  
Among whom are the Hon. ABEL P. UP-  
SHUR, late Secretary of State; Gov. GIL-  
MER, late Secretary of the Navy; Com.  
KENNON, of the Navy; VIRGIL MAX-  
CY, late Charge des Affaires in Belgium;  
and Mr. GARDINER, Proprietor of Gar-  
diner's Island of New York.

Correspondence of the Philadelphia Ledger,  
WASHINGTON, Feb. 29.

The day was surprisingly beautiful. We thought from yesterday's cloudy sky that we would have a rainy day of it, but the sun rose clear and bright, and the town from early in the morning presented a gay and busy scene. Nearly all the carriages were engaged, and freighted with the loveliness, beauty and grace of the city. About 11 o'clock, A. M. the President of the United States, Mrs. Robert Tyler, Miss Cooper, Mr. John Tyler, Jr., with a large number of officers in glittering uniforms, all the members of the Cabinet save Mr. Spencer, many other high functionaries of State, grave Senators and aspiring members, quite a number of attaches and secretaries of Legation General Almonte, Minister from Mexico, (Sir Richard Packenham had been invited, but declined,) and a number of other gentlemen, whose names I do not recollect, were assembled on the deck of one of the steamers, plying between here and Alexandria, fast bearing down for that place. Opposite the Navy Yard a boatload of Musicians were taken on board, who, as we approached Alexandria, and the Princeton hove in sight, struck up Hail Columbia, while we were describing a graceful curve under her bow to view the splendid steamer in all her pride, the flags of every nation streaming from every mast, and her yards manned to return the cheers that were uttered by the company as we neared her.

We now approached her on her starboard side, and came quite close to her. A bridge was made from our hurricane deck to the Princeton, and the ladies and gentlemen gently received by the officers on deck, and conducted to Captain Stockton, in full uniform. The band now struck up "The Star Spangled Banner," the marines presented arms, and as soon as the company were on board, a salute of twenty-one guns was fired, the band still playing national airs; and it was quite amusing to see how many ladies rose and on deck to witness the manoeuvre, although they had been politely requested to step down out to be annoyed with the smell of powder, or the noise of the report.

No one imagined, from the pride and cheerfulness which prevailed in that throng, that Death was walking in the midst of them, coolly singling out his victims. A splendid dinner was served in the cabin, and the ladies sat down first, and were waited on by the gentlemen, who were really agreeable, and did the best, with wit and repartee, to season the repast.

In the meanwhile the Princeton hove anchor and made sail; bearing down for Fort Washington and Mount Vernon. Past Fort Washington, where the Potomac expands and presented sufficient scope for the power of her big guns, the forward gun was shotted and fired, the ball striking the water and rebounding five or six times till the eye would no longer follow its progress. To observe the effect of the shot I had posted myself on the nearest harbored cannonade gun, and the sailors had erected a kind of scaffolding for the ladies to stand on by the side of me. One or two had taken their position there, and beside me stood Mr. Secretary Upshur, intent upon witnessing the whole manoeuvre. I offered him my place, but he declined, saying he preferred to stand where he was—the precise spot where an hour afterward he was torn to pieces. Meanwhile the table had been again set for the gentlemen, and we repaired down to join in the general merriment.

of the Navy, who, at the same time was chief of one of the Bureaus in the Navy Department.

When the gun was fired, the whole ship shook, a dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole group on the fore-castle; but when this blew away, an awful scene presented itself to the view of the spectator.

The lower part of the gun from the trunnions to the breech was blown off, and one half section of it lying on Mr. Upshur's breast. It took two sailors to remove it. He was badly cut over the eye and in his legs—his clothes were literally torn from his body—he expired in about three minutes. Gov. Gilmer of Virginia was found equally badly injured. He had evidently been struck by the section of the gun before it had reached Mr. Upshur, Mr. Sykes, the member from New Jersey, endeavored to raise him from the ground, but was unable. A mattress was procured, and he was placed on it; before any medical assistance could be procured, he was no longer among the living.

Mr. Maxcy had his arms and one of his legs cut off, the pieces of flesh hanging to the mutilated limbs, cold and bloodless in a manner truly frightful. He died instantly.

Mr. Gardiner, of New York, and Commodore Kennon lingered about half an hour; but they did not seem for a single moment to be conscious of their fate, and expired almost without a groan. The flags of the Union were placed over the dead bodies as their winding sheets.

Behind the gun, the scene, though at first equally distressing, was less alarming. Captain Stockton, who was knocked down, almost instantly rose to his feet, and jumped on the wooden carriage to survey the whole effect of the calamity. All the hair of his head and face was burnt off; and he stood calm and undismayed, but silent over the wreck. In addition to the deaths already mentioned, about a dozen sailors were badly wounded; one was dead, and behind him Col. Benton, Judge Phelps, and Mr. Strickland, as if dead, extended on the deck. On that side, by a singular concatenation of circumstances, Mr. Tyson of Philadelphia, was the only person who stood his ground, though a piece of the gun, weighing about two pounds, had passed through his hat, about two inches from his skull and fallen down by the side of him.

The lady who had Col. Benton's arm was actually blown into the rigging, but not hurt. Col. Benton exclaimed, immediately after he fell, that he "was hurt!" but he was only stunned. He was carried aft and placed on a mattress, where Mrs. Benton and his friends administered to him what aid they could, which, however, he repeatedly declined, saying there was nothing the matter with him. He was soon after able to walk, with some slight assistance, over the railing of the ship on board the steamer that took the company off to Washington.

Judge Phelps, of Vermont, had his hat blown off and knocked off, and the buttons of his coat torn; but he was not otherwise injured. Mr. Strickland, of Philadelphia, was not at all injured, and instantly recovered his position.

Miss Woodbury and Miss Cooper, who, in company of Captain Reed, of the Army, and Mr. Welles, of Philadelphia, had been standing on a leeward gun, were not hurt; but Miss Woodbury, (the beautiful and accomplished daughter of the Senator from New Hampshire,) had her whole face sprinkled with blood, which, however, I am glad to say, was not her own.

Such was the force of the explosion, that the starboard and leeward bulwarks were literally shattered, and the part of the gun I described was blown into twenty or thirty pieces besides the two principal sections.

gentlemen, to tell me where my husband is?" "Oh, impossible!—impossible!—and he, can he, can he be dead!—impossible!"

Here Mr. Senator Rives, of Virginia, drew near. "Come near, Mr. Rives," she said, in a soft whisper, which resembled Ophele's madness, "tell me where my husband is—tell me whether he is dead. Now certainly, Mr. Rives, this is impossible—is it not so?" Mr. Rives stood speechless, the tears trickling down his cheeks. "I tell you, Mr. Rives, it is impossible," she almost screamed; and then again moderating her voice, "Now do, Mr. Rives, tell his wife whether her husband lives." Here several ladies exclaimed, "O God grant that she may be able to cry. It would certainly relieve her some. If not she must die of a broken heart."

### FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE DEPLORABLE ACCIDENT.

I have very little to add to the recital of yesterday's catastrophe. There is a rumor that one or two of the sailors were blown overboard, through the portion of the bulwarks which was carried away; but I have heard no such thing from the officers, and being an eye witness, I can only say these rumors have been fabricated after we had come up from Alexandria, and some allowance, therefore, is to be made for the fancy of the retailers of such stories.

There was also a story about Captain Stockton's attempting to jump overboard, in which there is not a shadow of truth. Captain Stockton proved himself every inch a calm, collected, brave man. As informed you yesterday, the hair of his head and face was burnt to cinders, and he was knocked down flat on the deck, but he instantly regained his feet and sprang on the carriage of the gun to view the devastation it had wrought among the distinguished guests and the crew of the Princeton. I shall never forget that face. He looked like a shipwrecked mariner, who had been borne by the raging surf to a bleak shore, and was now beholding from a prominence the hopeless condition of his frail bark, his friends and his fortunes. But he was calm and resigned, and with a half-stifled voice merely remarked, pointing at the mutilated and mangled corpses of the distinguished men that had met such a cruel and untimely fate, "I wish I was among them!"

Poor Mrs. Gilmer is the next object of universal regret. Her husband, Governor Gilmer, had just been inducted into the office of Secretary of the Navy, which post he had only filled ten days. He left her poor, the mother of nine living children, just at a moment when her hopes began to brighten, and she looked forward to happier days for herself and her little ones. She is yet comparatively a young, and certainly a good-looking woman. Her grief, which I attempted to describe to you in my last letter, might have been a plastic model of *Melpomene* for a sculptor. Never in my life did I behold anything approaching to such unexpressed wretchedness, depicted in a calm, tenacious countenance. I learned from the best source, that immediately after her returning home, she fell into hysterics, and screamed; but not a word of complaint escaped from her clenched lips—not a tear trickled down her icy cheeks, from her parched and inflamed eyes.

Young Mr. Kennon was on the wharf when we landed, on hersebeck, awaiting the arrival of his father, whose body was so completely blackened and discolored as scarcely to be recognized. But why should I continue to depict these harrowing scenes, over which the veil of oblivion had better be cast, as the American flag shrouded the bodies of the deceased. I will only add this, that the Princeton could scarcely have been in an engagement in which so many valuable lives would have been lost at a single blow. The whole city is plunged in stupor and dismay, the public bureaux are shut up, and it is believed that wire-working and President-making will, for a brief period at least, be suspended. God grant that some peace may come out of this horrible tragedy.

When the size of the gun, the quantity of powder necessary for its discharge, and the crowded state of the vessel at the time of the discharge are taken into consideration, there is reason, I think, for being thankful to Divine Providence that no more lives were lost. We were at the time going under three full topsails, and the jib had just been taken in. Suppose the ship had caught fire in her rigging or sails, how many lives do you think would have been saved out of the five hundred on board! And was there ever a vessel of six hundred tons burden that had as many bright marks for destruction on board as the Princeton! The President, with all his family save Mr. Robert Tyler, four of the members of the Cabinet, a very large number of Senators and members, and some of the most distinguished officers of the Navy and Army, would, perhaps, have perished in the elements. The fact is, I had a presentiment that some disaster would happen on board, and expressed it to a friend. And in

case of an accident, I was sure that, with such a crowd and so many ladies on board, excited as many of us were by both the cheer and the gala, it would have been impossible to maintain discipline, or even to be heard or understood.

Again, the bursting of such a huge mass might have sunk us or disabled the engine, or struck the powder magazine. But it is useless to indulge in idle conjectures of this sort. Suffice it to say, that considering all circumstances the nation has reason to be thankful that things are not worse.

In justice to Captain Stockton, it is due to say, that he did not wish to make the second trial with so many ladies on board; but that the latter put it to vote and decided in the affirmative. The third unfortunate trial was made at the earnest solicitations of some members of Congress.

Lieut. Hunt was this day examined, and stated that the gun was only charged with 25 pounds of powder, which is five pounds less than the usual charge, and that he loaded her himself. The gunner, a blacksmith by trade, was also examined and corroborated the statement of the Lieutenant, and gave it as his opinion that the gun burst because it was composed of bad materials, of iron not perfectly welded, or either of two kinds of iron welded together at different temperatures, and therefore leaving flaws and fissures between. Others are still positive that the portion from the trunnions to the breech, at least, was of cast-iron, only thinly covered with a jacket, as the sailors call it, of wrought iron. The thickness of this wrought iron is represented to be not more than a quarter of an inch. Captain Stockton has demanded a strict investigation of the matter by learned and scientific men, and as they is a half section, weighing at least two tons, left of the fractured piece, there cannot, in my opinion, be much doubt as to the truth being ultimately discovered. For my own part I still adhere to the opinion expressed in my letter of this morning, that malleable iron may by a series of impingements be changed back into the granular state, and that the constructors of the gun are not so much to blame.

Mrs. Gilmer it is said, refused to eat, drink or sleep. She never put off the dress she wore on ship, and refused till this afternoon to see any one. Great fears were entertained for her mind; but this afternoon, she admitted several persons and was much more calm and composed.

The bodies of Governor Gilmer, Judge Upshur, Mr. Maxcy, Commodore Kennon, and Mr. Gardiner, were brought to the White House and deposited in the east room, which had but on Tuesday night been the scene of so much merriment! They were laid in an elegantly wrought mahogany coffin, the lid of which, being made to open at the head, were lined with white satin, as indeed the whole interior of the coffin. The bodies were dressed in fine linen shirts, plaited in front, with snow white collars, and white satin cravats. No one had access to them but the members of the Committee and a few persons known to them or the President's family. To-morrow they will in all probability, be exposed to the public. One or two persons I observed cutting locks from the heads of Mr. Gilmer and Mr. Maxcy. The former, it appears, was killed by a piece of iron entering his skull, about an inch over the left eye. The most frightfully mangled face was that of Judge Upshur, which, in several places, and about the mouth, was covered with white sticking plaster, to conceal the dreadful devastation wrought in it by the unfortunate catastrophe. None of the faces, however, show the least contortion of muscles. They seem to have died instantaneously, and without a struggle.

It was agreed, by both Houses, that the funeral expenses should be borne by the National Treasury, who, immediately after passing the Resolution adjourned till after the funeral.

Meanwhile, the White House, and all the Departments, are closed, the doors being lined with black crepe, and black festoons decorating the windows.

The East Room and the Hall of the White House, which had just been decorated for the great private ball, to which a large number of invitations had been sent out by the President and Mrs. Robert Tyler, on to-morrow, are now shrouded in black crepe. The chandeliers, mantlepieces, glasses, flower vases, and candle-labres are dressed in black, and the five coffins in the centre, where, but three days ago, as many groups of dancers had been joining the mystic ring, produced a tragical effect, and sensations similar to those which might be experienced by a change from a flower garden to a charnel-house.

## TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 29, 1844.

The Deplorable Accident on board the Princeton—Message from the President—Action of Congress—Mr. Rives' remarks in the Senate.

SENATE.—As soon as the journal was read, the following Message was announced from the President of the United States:

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

I have to perform the melancholy duty of announcing to the two Houses of Congress the death of the Hon. Abel P. Upshur, late Secretary of State, and the Hon. Thomas W. Gilmer, late Secretary of the Navy.

This most lamentable occurrence transpired on board the United States ship of war the Princeton, on yesterday, at about half after four o'clock in the evening, and proceeded from the explosion of one of the large guns of the ship.

The loss which the Government and the country have sustained by this deplorable event is heightened by the death, at the same time, and by the same cause, of several distinguished persons and valuable citizens.

I shall be permitted to express my great grief at an occurrence which has thus suddenly stricken from my side two gentlemen upon whose advice I so confidently relied in the discharge of my arduous task of administering the office of the Executive department, and whose services at the interesting period were of such importance.

In some relief the public sorrow which must necessarily accompany this painful event, it affords me much satisfaction to say that it was produced through no carelessness or inattention on the part of the officers and crew of the Princeton, but must be set down as one of those casualties which, to a greater or less degree, attend upon every service, and which are invariably incident to the temporal affairs of mankind.

I will also add that it in no measure detracts in my estimation from the value of the improvement contemplated in the construction of the Princeton, or from the merits of her brave and distinguished commander and proprietor.

JOHN TYLER.  
Washington, Feb. 29, 1844.

ties of brotherhood and affection. Let us "put away from us all bitterness and wrath, and evil speaking;" and when we come together again, under the chastening influence, we shall all feel, I trust, how much better patriots we are for being better Christians.

Resolved, That the Senate is impressed with a profound sense of the awful calamity which yesterday occurred on board of the steamer Princeton, by the explosion of a gun, involving the loss of many valuable lives, and among them of the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Navy.

Resolved, That the Senate will attend in a body the obsequies of the deceased members of the Cabinet, and a committee of five be appointed to make arrangements, with such committee as may be appointed on the part of the House of Representatives, for the funeral.

Resolved, That the members of the Senate will go into mourning by wearing crepe on the left arm for thirty days.

Resolved, That a copy of the foregoing resolutions be transmitted to the President of the United States.

The resolutions having been read, a message was received from the House of Representatives, announcing the action of that body touching this awful calamity. The message was read and concurred.

The resolutions submitted by Mr. Rives were unanimously agreed to, and the following Senators were appointed a committee of arrangements on the part of the House of Representatives, viz: Messrs. Rives, Archer, King, Woodbury and Bayard.

The Senate then, in accordance with its previous action, adjourned till Monday next.

The House passed resolutions of similar nature.

RARE DOING OF A TAILOR.—The bridge over the Tenth at Doune is well worth a passing notice. It is a strong, sturdy erection, though upwards of three hundred years old, and the work of a tailor. In the parapet is the following inscription, still distinctly legible; we shall modernise the spelling: "In God is all my trust, said Spittal. The tenth day of September, in the year of God, 1555 years, founded was this bridge, by Robert Spittal, tailor to the Most Noble Princess Margaret, Queen to James the Fourth." Mr. Spittal was not ashamed of his profession, for in addition to the designation in the inscription he has ornamented the parapet with the characteristic emblem of a large pair of scissors! There is a tradition in the district concerning this worthy knight of the shears. There was a ford and ferry about half way between the present bridge and Doune Castle, and Spittal pass the ford. The fare was a diet, but spittal had no smaller coin than a bodle (equal to two dials), and having been at former times ill pleased with the inattention of the ferryman, he very coolly took out his shears, clipped the bodle in two, and gave one half to the ferryman! The careful tailor grew rich and prosperous, and was a public benefactor. He built two other bridges; one at Bannock, and another at Tullicbody; and he formed a hospital in Stirling, from which widows and orphans are still relieved and supported. Queen Margaret's tailor was therefore, no ordinary man. "He placed a motto on his hospital at Sterling, 'The liberal man deviseth liberal things,' and he surmounted it again with a new presentation of his shears—the source of his liberality. Is Queen Victoria's tailor as proud of shears, or as disposed to devise liberal things?" *Inverness Courier.*

TRINITY'S HOWL.—Elder Swann, while laboring for the souls of the Bunker Hillers, at times is quite happy in his local allusions. Said he—"The people have worked very hard and spent a vast sum of money to build yonder monument in honor of the dead; now, if they would work as hard and spend as much money to build a monument of souls in honor of Jesus Christ, they would make the devil howl so that you could hear him all over the United States!" Even the anxious-minded of the elder's hearers could not help smiling at the idea of such a howl from his Satanic majesty.

"Up to Stars."—Volutes of Italian poems, just received in the British metropolis, furnish fine amusement for the learned wits. Leigh Hunt has shown himself up to snuff in giving a merry interpretation to these effusions. The following is a free translation of the poem on sneezing.

"What a moment! what a doubt!  
All my nose inside and out,  
All my thrilling, tickling caustic,  
Pyramid rhinocerostic  
Wants to sneeze, and can not do it?  
Now it yearns me, thrills me, stings me,  
Now with rapturous torments wrings me,  
Now says, 'Sneeze, you fool; get thro' it!  
Sneeze—Oh, 'most de—sh—  
I—most de—sh—  
(Hang it! I shall sneeze, till spring)  
Snuff is a most delicious thing."

The virtues flourish best in the form of a song, moreover, where each is required to fill its proper place, and is expected to do no more.