

Chapter 1

May 10, 1861—St. Louis, Missouri

The sound intruded on the bright spring day, cutting across the persistent whisper of the wind in the treetops and the cacophony of chirping birds. It was in variance with the placid scene of wild flowers blooming at the edges of the roadway and the redbuds' blossoms that hung like a pale purple haze across the landscape. Leigh Pennington paused uneasily to listen to it, her gracefully arched eyebrows drawn together as she tried to discern its source. The sound came gradually nearer, a swelling rhythm: like a distant drumbeat or a hundred footsteps falling together, like the rush of waves upon a shore or a cordon of marching men. Clutching the carefully packed basket of sundries she had been on her way to deliver to her fiancé at the Confederate camp on the outskirts of town, Leigh whirled to stare back the way she had come, down the country lane toward swiftly advancing ranks of Union soldiers. The dappled sunlight that filtered through the branches above cast shifting patterns against the men's dark uniforms and glinted off their polished weapons as they marched closer. The troops came like an encroaching blue flood through the tunnel of old trees that overhung the road, and Leigh realized with despairing certainty that their destination was the same as hers. The Union army was marching on Camp Jackson!

For a few seconds she stood immobile as the ramifications of what was happening washed over her. Then, thinking she might be able to sound the alarm at the Confederate compound, Leigh turned to run. But before she had gone a hundred yards toward the camp in Lindell's Grove, she was engulfed in the living current of civilians that was surging along beside the Union troops. There were knotted clumps of people pushing forward: men, women, and children moving apace with the soldiers, apparently intent on witnessing the first confrontation of the Civil War in St. Louis. Leigh was jostled and buffeted as groups brushed past in their haste to reach the shady grove at the edge of town where the Confederate camp stood. And as the crowd congealed around her, she was helplessly swept along with them. A babble of excitement rose around Leigh as both cheers and jeers were flung at the grim, straight-backed soldiers. Some of the shouts expressed approval of the Union's actions in attacking the newly formed compound

of state militia with its blatantly Southern leanings, while other shouts were harsh indictments of it. The voices clashed just as the two groups of soldiers soon would, and as Leigh was hustled inexorably forward, her mind was filled with thoughts of escape. She struggled determinedly toward the relative safety at the edge of the crowd, but the bodies were packed too tightly and the crush had grown too dense. She watched in anger and frustration as the basket she had packed for her fiancé, Lucas Hale, and his brother Brandon was torn from her grip and its contents dispersed into a sea of greedy hands. With a swift-rising panic that took her breath, Leigh began to understand her helplessness against the multitudes that were gathering, and as she stood wedged in the midst of them, she was afraid as much for those around her as she was for herself. Caught in a haze of carnival gaiety, no one in the crowd seemed to sense the growing danger. She alone realized that once these Union soldiers reached Camp Jackson, there might well be a battle in which soldiers and civilians alike could be killed.

When Leigh reached the wide, familiar meadow, now checkered with row upon row of canvas tents, the Union forces were converging from several directions to systematically surround the field. Meanwhile, the Confederates ran helter-skelter across the grass, snatching up arms and ammunition, though no order to do so had been given. Before the Southerners could form themselves into any semblance of a military unit, the camp was ringed by an unbroken wall of blue uniformed men with their bayonets at the ready.

A turbulent silence fell as the last of the Northern troops assumed their positions and General Nathaniel Lyon from the Federal arsenal sent a note to General David Frost, the state militia commander, demanding Camp Jackson's surrender. In the face of the Union's far superior strength and the confusion in his own ranks, Frost had no choice. With only a few minutes' deliberation, he capitulated without a struggle.

In the crowd's reaction to the surrender, Leigh could sense a full spectrum of response, as diverse as the population of St. Louis itself. The faces around her mirrored pride, regret, disbelief, anger, and fear, each expressing the individual's principles, sympathies, and beliefs. Nor were her own feelings, profound relief that there had been no bloodshed between the opposing armies and her concern for Lucas's and Brandon's safety, any less evident than those of her neighbors. The dread she felt at the inevitability of the coming conflict scored her wide brow with worry and tightened the corners of her gently curving mouth. The war that had begun so far away at Fort Sumter had come to St. Louis, and she was torn by her own conflicting loyalties.

Though the decision to surrender had come quickly, it took a long time to muster and disarm the captured Southern troops in preparation for the march to the Federal arsenal south of the city. While they waited, the milling crowd of citizens grew restless, and speculation ran high as to the fate of the Confederate prisoners. Women wept silently, hoping for one final glimpse of their menfolk, fearful for their safety. Leigh watched too, as anxious as the others to be reassured. She had known Lucas and Brandon Hale all her life and loved them both. Only a month before she had promised to marry Lucas, and as she shielded her eyes against the brightness, she scanned the growing ranks of captured men, seeking either his gilded head or Bran's coppery hair to reassure herself of their well-being. But as hard as she searched, there was no sign of either man, and her uneasiness grew.

"Oh, Lucas, where are you?" she breathed, the whisper catching in her throat. Her concern for her own safety was eclipsed by the fear for her fiancé and his brother.

As the mustering of the Confederate troops went on beneath the scorching Missouri sun, the civilian crowd continued to swell, until the road back to the city was lined with pedestrians and clogged with carriages and carts. To pass the time, flasks and even jugs of homemade moon-

shine were circulated from man to man. As her attention turned once more to those around her, Leigh began to notice people armed with guns and clubs pushing closer to the line of march. The tenor of the crowd was subtly changing too, as discord and impatience became full-blown discontent. She was aware of a growing menace in the air, but she knew Lucas and Brandon's fate might well be decided in the next minutes, and she could not desert them.

Finally the troops began to move out, the Confederates leaving their compound flanked by the victorious Union volunteers. As they marched out the camp gates, catcalls and curses rose from the crowd, some meant to bait the victors and some to taunt the vanquished. Bricks, bottles, and rocks flew along with the insults, and the closely packed citizens began to surge and fall back in a writhing mass. Once again Leigh was swept along with the mob, unable to break free. Her legs moved of their own volition to keep her abreast of the flow of bodies, but with a shiver of terror she realized that anyone who fell would be hopelessly crushed under hundreds of trampling feet. Shoulders and elbows prodded and jabbed her as the people followed along beside the sober military procession. The tension, both between the soldiers and the crowd and between factions of the crowd itself, escalated with each passing moment. The din around Leigh grew louder too, building swiftly in a rush of frenzied voices. Her fear grew apace with the noise, as waves of greater and greater ferment rolled and crashed around her. Somewhere to her right the fervor grew to a deafening roar until there was the single, sharp retort of a pistol. For a moment the crowd seethed in silence, then clamored with renewed outrage. From farther down the line of march there was a blossoming of musket fire that seemed to be moving closer and closer.

Every brain simultaneously grasped the danger, and the throng of citizens erupted into a pushing, shoving mass as they fought to escape the threat of harm. All around her Leigh heard the shrill panic of women's screams and the hoarse moan of men's muttered curses. There was the surge of blood singing in her veins as she became a victim of that same mindless terror. Wildly she sought some refuge from the maddened frenzy of the crowd and the troop's sporadic firing, fighting the crosscurrents of plunging bodies. Then, driven by the horde at her back, Leigh lost her footing as stones rolled from beneath her slipped feet. She cried out in despair as the world shifted beneath her, knowing full well that a fall could mean her death. Then a large hand clamped tightly around her wrist and dragged her to safety behind the stout bole of an oak.

For a few moments Leigh gasped for air, thankful for the tree trunk at her back and the protection of a man's hard, strong-limbed form along the length of hers. His weight crushed her full skirts as he leaned even closer to shield her body with his own, and slowly Leigh raised her head to look up into the determined, high-cheekboned face of her rescuer.

She went strangely weak for a moment, whether from her narrow escape or this man's nearness she could not say. She only knew that in spite of his rugged, uncompromising features, there was something reassuring about the solid feel of him beside her and the expression in his light blue eyes.

In that moment a feeling of breathless surprise filled Leigh as she became aware of the nubby texture of his tweed lapels beneath her clutching fingers and caught the faint, clean, citrus scent that clung to his tanned skin. Inexplicably, she sensed a like response in the man beside her. As they stood pressed intimately together, some intangible charge arced between them sending hot blood coursing to Leigh's cheeks, turning them from parchment white to rosy red. Though she tried, she could not look away, and as she watched him helplessly, she saw his pupils widen until the arctic blue irises became a pale corona for some unfathomable emotion that lit the inky depths. Then abruptly his heavy eyebrows clashed above the bridge of his nose as his

hands clenched tight on her arms. His lips narrowed dangerously before he spoke, and the first words he flung at her were harsh and totally unexpected.

"God damn!" he whispered. "God damn it, no!"

Stunned and outraged by his curse, neither moved, hanging suspended, untethered by reality, until the nearby crack of a musket and the splintering of the bark not a foot above their heads broke the spell that held them.

In a maelstrom of confusion, Leigh looked away, seeking to calm her ragged breathing and quiet the jarring of her heart. Beyond her rescuer's broad shoulder she could see a wounded man twisting in pain on the ground nearby. Without considering the risk, she moved instinctively to go to his aid, but the hand that had loosened its hold on her shoulders flexed again to hold her fast.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?" her rescuer snarled.

Leigh struggled and pushed against him, heedless of the gunshots erupting around them.

"For God's sake, let me go!" she shouted. "Can't you see that man is hurt? Let me go to help him!"

The tall man's hold slackened, though he held her effortlessly immobile. "Don't be a fool, woman," he hissed against her ear. "At least wait until the shooting stops. Be sensible. "

The logic of his words penetrated slowly, and Leigh went still, though now the protection this man offered seemed suddenly as much restraint as shelter. She became agonizingly aware of the press of his wide chest against her and the intruding knee that had insinuated itself between her thighs. She could feel his heartbeat in counterpoint with her own and the warmth of his breath against her skin. In spite of his obvious concern for her safety and the fact that he had probably saved her life, Leigh resented his encroaching presence and the enforced intimacy. Within her there was an overwhelming need to be free of him, to be doing her part to help the injured; and she tried without success to withdraw from his touch.

The firing dwindled away at last, and when he deemed it safe, the big man shifted his weight and Leigh scrambled away. She went immediately to the wounded man fallen near them and noted, as she bent to aid him, that there were other bodies sprawled across the grass and along the roadside. With practiced hands she opened his clothes to expose a wound high in his shoulder.

"Give me your handkerchief," she ordered her rescuer. He complied wordlessly, watching in surprise as the young woman worked quickly and skillfully to staunch the blood that flowed freely from the hole in the man's shoulder. "And now your cravat," Leigh continued.

"What for?" he demanded, already loosening the black silk tie at his throat.

"I'm going to need it for a bandage," she explained. Taking the strip of cloth to bind the compress in place, she reassured her patient and moved swiftly to a woman crumpled on the ground not far away. After a cursory examination Leigh moved on, her face grim. The next injured person they came across was a girl of twelve or thirteen bleeding from a gash at her hairline. As Leigh attacked the hem of her petticoat for cloth to bind the wound, she turned to the tall man at her elbow.

"I'm going to need something for bandages, Mr . . ."

"Banister," he provided helpfully as he turned to go. "I'll see what I can find."

Banister strode quickly in the direction of the Rebel compound, ignoring the dregs of the troops that marched past him. Surely, he reasoned, even if there were no bandages to be had at Camp Jackson, he could at least get some bedding to press into service to bind the injured.

By the time he returned, the troops were gone and most of the crowd had dispersed. He

found Leigh comforting a crying child while she fashioned a sling for him from the sash of her gown.

"Thank you, Mr. Banister." She paused to send him a melting smile. "Now could you tear those sheets into strips and sit with our young friend here until his parents come to claim him?"

Banister did as he was told, watching with amazement and growing respect as the tall, auburn-haired woman moved with calm dispatch from one group of needy to the next, leaving comfort in her wake. By the time the child's mother came to claim him, the first ambulances had begun to pull up at the roadside. After that, Banister helped load the dead and wounded into the wagons for transport to the city's hospitals.

As her rescuer watched the last of the emergency vehicles rumble off down the street, Leigh came to stand beside him. All around them the ground was littered with the rocks and bottles that had been thrown at the hapless troops and with stray clothes and belongings dropped by the crowd in the frenzy of escape. Already scavengers were picking through the leavings, exclaiming occasionally over a fortuitous find. With the emergency over, Leigh's energy ebbed, draining away to leave her weak-kneed and weary. Her companion instantly recognized a change in her and with difficulty stifled the urge to drape a protective arm around her sagging shoulders. Instead he offered her what encouragement he could.

"You were magnificent with the wounded, my dear," he told her softly, a warm smile lighting his face.

With an effort Leigh turned to him, surprised and strangely delighted by the rich words of praise and the glow of admiration in the depths of his pale eyes. Color mounted to her cheeks as the current of some undefinable emotion flowed between them. It was a sweet and nourishing force that seemed to strengthen and renew her. All at once Leigh was able to square her shoulders and smile back at this tall stranger, oddly flustered by his nearness.

"I thank you for your kind words, sir," she began formally, "for saving me from the crowd, and for helping with the injured, though in truth you did quite as much as I to make them comfortable."

Banister's smile deepened at her thanks, and for the first time she noticed the deep masculine dimples that bracketed the curve of his lips and the crinkling lines that webbed from the corners of his eyes.

"I did what I could, miss," he demurred in an equally proper tone, "but you are the one with real skill."

"My grandfather was a doctor, Mr. Banister," she volunteered.

"My given name is Hayes," he corrected her, "and since we've been partners in adversity, I see no reason why you should be so formal as to call me Mr. Banister. And your name is . . ."

"Leigh, Leigh Pennington."

He offered her his arm as if they had met on a dance floor and not in the midst of a battlefield. "Well, then, Leigh Pennington, after all that's happened today, I think it would be wise for me to take you home."

She retreated a step, prepared to refuse him. What did she know about him, after all? Could she trust him? He had saved her from the crowd and then helped her with the injured, but he had also cursed at her for no apparent reason, as if she were some common woman. Besides, she had made the trip to Lindell's Grove on her own, and she was surely able to find her way home again. "That really isn't necessary," she began, ready to assure him that she was quite capable of taking care of herself, but then the absurdity of what she had been about to say struck her. Here she stood, bruised and battered, disheveled and bloodstained, her basket and bonnet

gone, touting her independence to the man who had saved her life.

In the pause Hayes Banister pressed his advantage. "Even if you don't need my protection, won't you humor me? I know I haven't made the best first impression, but unless you let me see you home, I won't sleep a wink tonight wondering if you arrived safe and sound."

Leigh knew she was being manipulated and saw the glint of teasing laughter in his eyes. Still, there was no way to refuse him. Reluctantly she took his arm, and he covered her hand with his.

"I rode the horsecar partway out here, but I doubt they're running now," she began, but Banister cut in on her explanation.

"It doesn't matter; I was quite looking forward to the walk."

As they retraced Leigh's steps together, she studied her rescuer. He was an uncommonly tall man, built big and rangy, but with smooth, confident movements that belied his size. His wavy, walnut-brown hair grew thick and long on his collar and in heavy dark sideburns that traced the lines of his cheeks. They set off his strong features—a long, straight nose, a sculptured mouth, and determined chin—in the same way the curving dimples framed his smile. His forehead was high and his eyes wide set, their color as pale and cool as aquamarine. Nor was Leigh unaware of the expensive, well-cut clothes he wore, now as dirty and tattered as her own.

They chatted companionably as they walked: about his reasons for being in St. Louis and the friends she'd had in Camp Jackson. But when they arrived at the gate to the Pennington town house on Lucas Place, both fell silent.

How, Leigh wondered, staring uncomfortably at her hands, could she adequately thank a man whose quick action had saved her life? What words could express her gratitude for the help he had given her with the injured? And why did it seem so difficult to say good-bye to this virtual stranger? She raised her eyes to his face and saw that he was waiting almost tentatively for her to speak.

Then, as they hung in the abyss of their fading conversation, a woman burst from the door to the house and rushed toward them down the steps. "Leigh! Oh, Leigh! Thank heavens you're safe!" she gasped as she hugged the girl fiercely. "Oh, Leigh, I've been so worried!"

There was no question of the relationship between the two women. Each had the same rich auburn hair and the same creamy skin. Even their fine patrician features were cast in the same mold, though the younger woman's seemed set in an expression more determined and resolute than the one the older woman wore.

"I'm fine, Mother," Leigh assured her, returning the embrace.

"I've been nearly frantic since your father sent word about what happened at Camp Jackson. Though why he didn't go to search for you, I will never know." Her Louisiana drawl was shrill with concern. "And what about Lucas and Bran? Are they safe, too?"

Leigh's face clouded. "In the confusion out there I never caught sight of either one of them, but I suppose they were captured with all the rest of General Frost's command. And as for their fate, no one knows what it will be."

Hayes Banister had been taking in the joyous reunion between the two women, pleased at his part in insuring it. Then, as if suddenly remembering his presence beside her, Leigh turned abruptly.

"Mother," she began, trying to remedy her oversight, "may I present Mr. Hayes Banister from Cincinnati. It's Mr. Banister you have to thank for my safety. Hayes, this is my mother, Althea Pennington."

Her daughter's casual use of Banister's given name was not lost on Althea, and as she ran

a discerning eye over the man who had given Leigh his protection, she wondered at the familiarity between them. "I thank you for seeing to my daughter's welfare, Mr. Banister. I fear she guards that precious commodity far too carelessly, as she did today, going off alone instead of waiting for Jeb and the carriage."

"I'd say Leigh was a victim of circumstances this time, Mrs. Pennington," Banister corrected her, "or she was sent to Camp Jackson by fate to look after the injured. Her skills and quick thinking may well have saved lives in the minutes before the ambulances arrived this afternoon."

"Oh, Hayes," Leigh began to demur, but Althea Pennington was pleased with his words of praise for her daughter's skill.

"Mr. Banister," she began, smiling up at him, "perhaps you would be willing to accept an invitation to supper this evening. It will only be a simple meal *en famille*, but I know my husband will be anxious to meet you and thank you for what you did to help Leigh today."

The invitation was both unexpected and welcome; he'd eaten far too many meals alone of late. Banister accepted warmly. "I'd like that very much, Mrs. Pennington."

"Good," Althea said and nodded as she ushered her daughter toward the house. "We'll see you at six o'clock."

"Until this evening, then," he replied. Hayes watched the two women enter the double doors of the handsome brick town house, then set off down Locust Street, scuffling absently through the dust.

Hayes Banister crossed the elegant lobby of the world-famous Planters' House Hotel, past the slick horsehair couches, the milling guests, and the banks of potted palms to the front desk. "There's a Mr. Travis waiting for you in the Gentlemen's Ordinary, sir," the clerk told him as he gave Hayes the key to his room.

Hayes's fingers tightened around the cool metal, and he frowned irritably. Now that he had found something more pleasant to occupy his mind than the business that had brought him to St. Louis, Travis had finally deemed it convenient to show up. Banister had been cooling his heels for the best part of a week waiting for this meeting, and now, though Travis's appearance was not particularly welcome, it would at least end the waiting. With a grimace, Hayes glanced down at his clothes. Finding them as dirty and disreputable as Leigh Pennington's had been, he decided Travis could wait for him for a change while he made himself presentable.

It was a few minutes later that Banister found Nathan Travis comfortably ensconced at a corner table in the smoky, dark-paneled room that was the gathering place and retreat of St. Louis's most influential men. It was here that they had come for years to eat the game and other delicacies that the hotel menu had to offer, drink fine brandy, and smoke their long, dark cigars as they discussed the politics of the day. To Hayes, Travis seemed somehow out of place in the plush, genteel surroundings. His worn black broadcloth coat and ill-fitting trousers were in sharp contrast to the well-dressed men at the surrounding tables, and his common manners the antithesis of those demonstrated by the other patrons. He was, at first glance, an unremarkable man, neither handsome nor ugly, with thin, sharply etched features to match the long, gangly body that sprawled in his chair. Yet Hayes was not fooled by the man's appearance. He knew there was keen intelligence in the coal-black eyes beneath their heavy lids, and steely strength in his wiry form. Many years ago when he had first met Travis, he had been taken in, but now

Banister knew the truth. Nathan Travis was anything but ordinary, for within him burned an instinct for survival that had been honed sharp by years of being more than what he seemed.

They had met when Banister was still living the sometimes wild and adventurous life of a river pilot, at a fuel stop just below Memphis. The steamboat Travis owned had put ashore with engine trouble, and while Hayes's boat had taken on wood, cargo, and passengers, he and the chief engineer had gone aboard to offer their services. It had taken a fair amount of tinkering to correct the problem, but by the time the Priscilla Anne was ready to shove off again, the disabled boat was running. It had been a chance meeting that first time, and it was months before Hayes came to realize that he and Travis were bound by the same stringent convictions and the same need to make things right. After that, whenever Travis turned up, be it in Vicksburg, New Orleans, or at the Banister Shipyards in Cincinnati, it had seemed less from fortune than from design.

"I trust you've found the accommodations here in St. Louis tolerably comfortable," Travis began conversationally as Hayes pulled out a chair to join him.

"Yes, the rooms are quite adequate," he agreed, "but I had expected to find James Eads in town when I arrived. I was looking forward to meeting him after finding so many of his inventions useful, first on the river and later at the shipyards."

"He was called to Washington unexpectedly to show the plans you came here to review to Lincoln and his Cabinet. He's expected back any time."

"Have his drawings been accepted, then?" Banister inquired.

Travis snickered. "The river fleet is like a bastard child; neither the Army nor the Navy wants to claim the responsibility or bear the expense."

"Don't those men understand the importance of the Mississippi to both the Union and the Confederacy?" Hayes demanded.

"Easy, Banister, easy," the other man soothed. "Eventually one or the other will admit the necessity of this project, and then it will get under way. Right now the Navy's busy blockading the Southern ports and the Army's trying to figure some way to keep the Rebs out of Washington. Besides, nothing like this ironclad fleet Eads is proposing has ever been attempted. It's small wonder they're reluctant to commit themselves."

"Well, where does the responsibility for defense of the rivers lie?" Banister wanted to know.

The other man shrugged and sat back in his chair, laying his napkin beside the empty plate.

"Traditionally, the Army has had jurisdiction over the inland waterways, but in the end it won't matter where the money comes from. This flotilla is vital to a Union victory, and once those men in Washington stop dickering over who'll pay for what, Eads's involvement in this project is inevitable. Properly educated or not, he's one of the Union's most capable engineers."

"Then why ask my opinion of his drawings?"

"Because two heads are better than one, and you do have the advantage of schooling as well as a lifetime spent around steamboats in one capacity or another. Have you had a chance to study his plans?"

Banister nodded. "There were copies at his office."

"And what did you think of them?"

"I think the plans are brilliant!" Hayes admitted, his voice deep with admiration. "Oh, there are some problems as I see it. Covering conventional riverboats with iron plating will make them heavy and slow to maneuver, and I think the sheathing on the pilot house should be made

thicker since that will be the nerve center of any mission the ironclads undertake."

"Do you have any recommendations to remedy the problems you've outlined?"

"Yes." Hayes nodded and launched into a complicated explanation of the revisions he would suggest to augment Eads's original plans.

Travis listened intently, obviously pleased with Banister's carefully considered changes and his own correct assessment of the other man's abilities as an engineer. "I'd be much obliged if you could write a report outlining what you just told me. Anything we can offer those men in Washington to encourage them to make up their minds about this project will give us that much more of a head start on the Rebels."

Hayes agreed. "I just wonder if St. Louis is the place to build this new ironclad fleet. After what happened out at Camp Jackson this afternoon, it's obvious that Southern sympathy is running high, so the place is bound to be riddled with Confederate informers. The local papers seem to be full of Secessionist doctrine and—"

Travis laughed with what seemed to be genuine humor. "I think old Nathaniel Lyon has the situation well in hand. He was out there scouting Camp Jackson just yesterday, and when he saw evidence of the arms shipment they'd received from Baton Rouge, he had the evidence he needed to move on that nest of traitors."

Hayes was stunned at the news that the commander of the Federal arsenal had been in the militia camp. "Wasn't he shot on sight?"

Travis laughed again. "What those Confederates saw was Major Frank Blair's old, blind mother-in-law out for her usual afternoon carriage ride. Lyon dressed in one of her black gowns and bonnets, with a mourning veil added for good measure. Not one of those Southern boys stopped playing soldier long enough to question him."

"The attack was well planned; I'll give him that. Frost never had a chance. But the incident afterward was tragic."

"There will be hell to pay for that, I reckon," Nathan Travis conceded as he rose to go.

"You write me that report now, won't you, Banister? Leave it at the front desk addressed to Mr. Jones. And then you might as well go on home to Cincinnati."

Hayes looked up at the enigmatic man standing over him. "Now that I've seen Eads's plans, I have a hankering to meet the man himself."

Travis shrugged. "Suit yourself, Banister, but I have a feeling your involvement with Mr. Eads and his plans for the ironclad fleet is far from over."