Interviews: Charles A. Dana's Recollections of the Civil War

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Because they were fighting all the time, and if you went to pay one regiment, half of the regiment might be in battle at that moment. It was better to wait until there was a more quiet time -- besides, what did they do with the money -- they could not spend it.

Because they were not engaged in immediate fighting. Hawkins probably was required somewhere else. He was sent there to attend to the negroes and to convert them into soldiers. Hawkins was perfectly satisfied and a competent man. But he got ill.

I never was in any of the councils, but they were just like any other -- these gentlemen came in to Grant's headquarters; everybody else went out and then they talked.

But they were apart -- I went out with Grant -- we rode out and when I got to the place he got off his horse and we got ours. He went forward and General Pemberton advanced and they shook hands and then they sat down and talked, and I think they sat on the ground -- under a tree. I do not remember whether they had any camp chairs or not. My impression is they sat on the ground.

I went into Vicksburg after the capitulation. I rode
in with General Grant, and the headquarters, the staff, and the
general impression was that the city was not so much damaged as
we should expect to see it, and yet there were a good many people,
where people had been living in holes dug in the bank -- it had
not high banks -- the road had been cut through hills by digging
holes away and there were a good many places where they had dug
into the bank and a man had made himself an abode there, and gen-
erally speaking, that was safer than a house, because if a shell
struck a house it would take it all to pieces, whereas if it went
against the bank, that would be only part of its explosive force
and that probably would not hurt it much. If you lived inside
you would get off without injury.

I just rode in through the city with Grant and left
that night -- went on to the steamer that was going up the river.
I went straight to Washington.

Perhaps I had got to Washington at that time. There
was a lot of talk with Grant. When I got there I was the only
man who had come there from the siege, and this was the first
great success -- the capture -- of Vicksburg that we had had.
The first great decisive. From Washington I got leave to go
and see my family right away, and I must have been here two or
three weeks, doing nothing until I was sent for to go down to
Chattanooga. I was appointed Assistant Secretary. I did not
get any commission, but I had the appointment. To get a commission, it had to be confirmed by the Senate, and the Senate did not begin to be in session until December, afterwards; but I was recognized everywhere. An appointment by the President. It did not require any papers. I think nothing was said to me upon the subject at all, but when I went to Mr. Stanton -- who sent for me to go to Washington -- he wanted me to go down into Tennessee and I went there, and my instructions -- everything was ready, including several letters; one to General Rosecranz, and to three or four other prominent men. One I remember to Johnston, who was then Military Governor of Tennessee, and in those letters the Secretary said: "Mr. Dana, one of my assistants." When the Senate met in December, one of the first things was the confirmation of this appointment.

That was a commercial proposal -- just what it was I do not remember, but I know that Mr. Ketchem was a banker here and Mr. Opdyke was a merchant. They had some scheme; I think they wanted me to come to New York to take charge of some commercial establishment or some banking establishment. I can not recollect now, and they offered me at the beginning, $10,000 a year. That I remember, and I meditated about it and I said "No" and they had communicated their intention to make this proposal to Mr. Stanton before hand, so that he might not say they were
trying to get his man away from him without his knowledge.

It was about the time of the riots here. It was before -- they happened afterwards -- a tremendous fight here in the streets. There were signs of it. I had been directed to do something about it. I think I had been to see General Dix, who was the commanding officer, but exactly what orders I had received, I do not remember.

Burnside had gone into East Tennessee -- he had his headquarters at Knoxville, and Rosecranz had gone down through Middle Tennessee and struck the Tennessee River, south of Nashville, and at that time they were probably 150 miles apart and my idea had been to go first to Burnside, and then afterward -- but I found that was not practicable.

Andrew Johnson was a man about up to my ears -- well, as tall as I. A man of dark complexion, did not wear any beard; dark hair, dark eyes, and a man of great determination of appearance. One circumstance -- when I went to see him in his office, he said: "Will you have a drink?" And I said, "Yes, I will." So he brought out a jug of whiskey and poured out as much whiskey as he wanted in a tumbler, and then made it about half and half water. Well, the theoretical philosophical drinker, he pours out a little whiskey and puts in almost no water at all -- drinks it pretty nearly pure -- but when you get to taking
a good deal of water with it, it shows you are in the habit of it, and I noticed that the Governor took more whiskey than most gentlemen would have done, and I concluded that he took it pretty often. His home was originally in East Tennessee, in Knoxville, but now he was Military Governor. That is an appointment Mr. Lincoln made, and he lived in the capital of the State. Burnside was at Knoxville. I do not think his home was there, but I do not remember just where it was. I do not remember who the military commander was, but I went with him. I remember that the circumstance of the whiskey was the only thing that impressed me very much.

Well, Bridgeport is on the Tennessee River, and we went right down there by train -- and the bridge there -- the railroad bridge crossed the river -- had been restored, and there was the river in between. That is a pretty wide river there. Could easily get across in flat boats, no trouble about it. Bridgeport was not then an important point, but it was a point that was greatly reduced in importance, that is, of inconsiderable importance, in comparison with others. It was important as being the last on the river -- when you left it by rail you went across the river. It was right on the river, and as commanding the crossing it had a kind of importance.

We went across the river in boats. There were -- I do
not remember what escort -- we had a body of cavalry, but how much, I do not remember -- I should not think there were over one hundred men, perhaps not so many, and there was with me, General Robert Mitchell, a cavalry officer, and he had a brother who was a General also. There must have been four or five men who were waiting for a chance to go forward to headquarters. We crossed near Bridgeport, perhaps very near, and we took the road on the south side, the road on the south side of the river, and it took us, I think across on the front flank of Lookout Mountain, and we may have crossed back to the other side before we got there. We had gone back to the North side before we got to Chattanooga.