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

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The capture of Orchard Knoll took place one day, and the attack on Missionary Ridge the day or two or three days after. This I remember distinctly, that Orchard Knoll was captured -- we were rather surprised that we got it -- we had not expected it and then that was made a basis of the subsequent operations, and besides Orchard Knoll is a low ridge and it does not extend by any means through the whole length of the valley between the City of Chattanooga and Missionary Ridge. When you stand in any point in Chattanooga and look toward Missionary Ridge, Orchard Knoll is off at your right, and yet it was very important in the subsequent operations and I remember very distinctly -- I cannot remember what day it was -- but I remember riding out there the next morning after the capture to Orchard Knoll, with no intention of going any farther, and the rebels of Missionary Ridge were cannonading the Orchard Knoll and there were on top of this hill General Grant, General Thomas, General Meigs, General Gordon 

Ranger, because I remember they were firing shells. The top of the ridge was covered with officers and some soldiers were there too, but mainly with officers, and when I got there I saw that they were firing shells and I saw that the shells had got the range so well that the shells burst pretty near the top of the ridge and everybody ducked -- you went down on your marrow-bones
and put your head down so that you would make as little of your-

self -- of the explosion of the shell -- as possible. I know I
did this. General Rawlins was alongside of me and as I went
down to get out of the way the shell came very near -- you can
see them coming you know, and as I went down immediately almost
before the explosion of the shell, it was still some distance from
us, I looked around and General Thomas, General Grant and General
Meigs, they were standing up -- it was not according to their
dignity to dodge, but pretty much everybody else did and General
Gordon Ranger was standing up too. Mr. Ranger had got a gun --
a cannon -- how he got it I do not know. He was loading it with
the help of one soldier and firing it himself over at the ridge,
and I recollect that Rawlins was very much disgusted at this
gorilla operation of Ranger. We did not stay there very long --
we rode back -- we had no duty -- we only went out to see what
was the value of this hill as a position and we concluded it was
of a good deal of value. Then the attack on Missionary Ridge
followed the same afternoon or the next day. But that was on
a day just like this. The sun was as bright as it is to-day,
and it looked like a parade -- like a holiday parade -- and the
whole army was out there in this valley. A force of Sherman's
had been brought over to attack the rebel works on their right,
and Sheridan was on our right. Tom Jefferson Wood was in the centre, and they formed in the valley this long column. I should think it was a mile long, or a mile and a half, formed just as if for a parade, and the first indication that it was anything else than a parade, was the breaking forward of the skirmishers and all the rest was a spectacle in this sunshine, with bands playing and flags flying—perhaps 70,000 men marching up the hill—they first took the rifle pits at the bottom and then went up spontaneously without any orders to the top of the hill.

Leaving Chattanooga, I cannot remember the name of the town—when we got in the town at night it was stopped. In the first place we went with an escort because we did not know what we would find and we were taken so different a line of march. We went over to—we had a small escort of cavalry—I do not know how many men—I should think not over a dozen, with a Lieutenant and a Sergeant. Then toward night, we came to a large house of stone, a very substantial looking house, and we went in there—stopped there—and they could accommodate us, and our escort camped in the barn—I do not know, I do not think they put up their tents. They stayed in the barn—we had one sentry out and we cooked our own supper—we had a cook with us, but they lent us a table and they may have
let us have a little fresh bread or something like that and they were greatly interested in the news -- they want to know -- I think they were Union people -- they were people in prosperous circumstances -- it was a large stone house and quite an unusual thing and there were two or three young women. One of them, I think, they told me was soon to be married and in the evening after dinner we went into the parlor and talked with them, and I remember that I should say two or three of these girls -- quite pretty girls -- got out an apparatus that I had not seen much then, for chewing snuff. You have the snuff in a box and you have some bits of wood -- I should say birch wood -- perhaps the sticks as long as that -- and you chew one end of them until it is split and then you put it into the dry snuff and take up a lot and then you put that in your mouth and suck it off and chew it -- like chewing tobacco, only it is in a more expeditious form -- you get the nicotine out of it and the stimulus sooner, and they call it "dipping snuff." I think "dipping" is the common word. I rather think you have a little tumbler of water that you put the end of the stick in. While these young women were talking with us -- and they were real pretty girls -- they were dipping the snuff and chewing it, sucking -- well, that looked like a local peculiarity we had never seen at home. I had seen it once or twice in Illinois. We stayed there all night.
The next day -- I think the next day we overtook General Sherman's command he was going to Knoxville with 20 or 30,000 men at a place called Morganton.

My impression -- I could not swear to it was this. The little Tennessee, and that is the affluent of the Tennessee -- it was a stream perhaps 30 feet wide and three or four feet deep, varying, but as it was there it was too deep for men to march through and the business was to build a bridge that they could march over upon, and we had a great deal of fun there. First they thought they could march through it, and then I remember my horse went through -- swam through, where he could not -- his feet could not strike the ground and I got across without any difficulty. I think Gen. Wilson got across, but I believe that the Lieutenant of our Squad of Cavalry men got in the middle of the river and his horse -- he had been riding a mule I think, and the mules and horses were used in a different way -- and I remember that his horse - his animal -- when we got into the middle of the stream where it was so deep that when you sat in the saddle the water would come up to your knees almost, and a little above the breast of the horse, his animal turned his head upward toward the current which was very strong, and he would not move. This poor fellow sat there in the middle of the stream and he could not move him. Finally, they drove in big wagons or trucks with two horses and drove that across and tide that to the bits
of the mule and dragged him out.

There was nothing — any need to evacuate the place.

We stayed in the house of a miller — I think it was — he seemed to be a prosperous man and had been used to carry on a large, and his wife and daughter, they were just delighted to see some Union officers. We stayed there twice — we stayed there also when we went back to Chattanooga — got there at night and spent the night there. The ladies of the house — they were immensely interested, so delighted to see the Union flag you know Burnside, was rather a large man physically, and I should think about six feet tall, with a large face and a small head, and heavy side whiskers, and an energetic man — decided man. When he first talked with you, you would think he had a great deal more intelligence than he really had, and a man without anything hidden — all frank — a manly fellow — he was well educated — a very showy man, not that he made any show — he was naturally that. You had to know him some time before you really took his measure.

When we were there a second time Sherman was there — Burnside's importance was reduced greatly.

I went directly, and I went through, I did not stop anywhere. Grant was soon after this made Commander of all the armies — Commander in Chief. Then he came to Washington and
the Alabama Campaign never made any attempt to carry out his design.

It was a stone building -- it was there a good while -- it was convenient and comfortable -- big, large rooms.