

The Civil War came to an end for nineteen-year-old Simeon M. Dufur in a forest outside Richmond during the cold, snowy night of March 1, 1864. That is, the fighting ended for Dufur, but not the battle for survival, which left scars he never recovered from.

Dufur's regiment, the 1st Vermont Cavalry, was attached to Colonel Ulric Dahlgren's command, which played a major role in Brigadier General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick's bold raid against Richmond. The raid's goal was three-fold: to seize the Rebel capital, free captured Federal troops from its prisons, and distribute amnesty proclamations. The raid failed. Dahlgren was killed in an ambush, and Kilpatrick's main force ran into unexpected resistance. In the midst of a surprise counterattack before mid-

night, Dufur became separated from his unit and was struck down in the melee by a passing Southern cavalryman as he was trying to mount up. He suffered two saber thrusts, one nearly severing the heel from his foot.

Fortunately, Dufur was in good health. He had just returned from a thirty-day furlough granted as part of the bounty for reenlisting for another term of service. A Canadian by birth, Dufur had been raised across the border in nearby Fairfield, Vermont, by an uncle and volunteered to take his place when the uncle, who was ill with tuberculosis, was drafted. Dufur fought with the 1st Vermont, that state's only cavalry regiment, from its very first charge against the enemy at the terminus of the Manassas Gap Railroad at Mount Jackson, Virginia, in mid-April 1862.

Separated now from his unit and severely wounded in a dark forest filled ominously with the sounds of shouts and shots, Dufur tried hobbling away, using a piece of wood as a crutch, but he was so weak that he had to lie down. Though the snow had stopped, the temperature was plummeting, and within minutes his wet uniform began to freeze. Almost forty years later, when he wrote his memoirs of the war, Dufur could still remember the "excruciating pain" he felt as he rose, hid his carbine and saber under some leaves, and began to move on. How far he might have gotten is moot. Within a short time, skirmishers from the 1st Alabama confronted him.

An officer let the injured Dufur ride his horse for part of the eight miles that he and about forty other captured

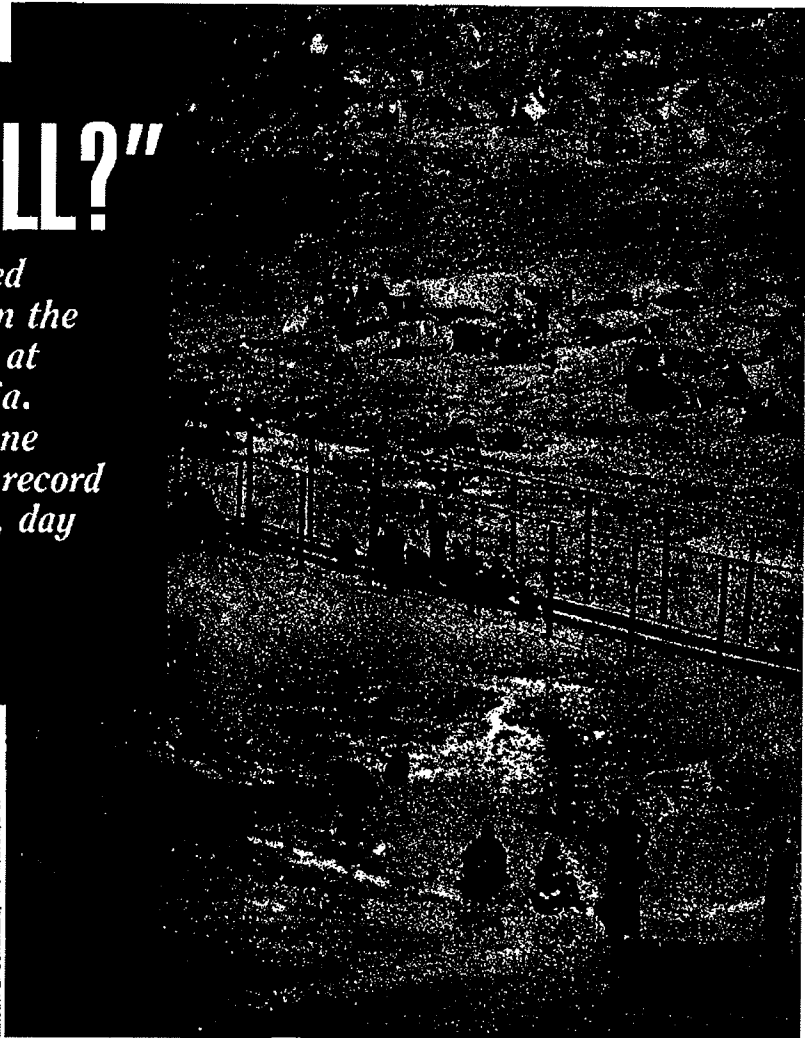
"IS THIS HELL?"

Thousands of captured Union soldiers died in the open-stockade prison at Andersonville, Georgia. This is the story of one inmate, who lived to record his experiences there, day by painful day.

by Nat Brandt

The squalid 26-acre plot was bisected by a tiny stream polluted by nearby latrines (foreground). In the drawing at far right, by Lew Wallace (better known as a politician, general, and novelist), a thirsty prisoner has been shot, undoubtedly for venturing too near the so-called deadline.

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cavalrymen were marched to Richmond. It was one of the few gestures of kindness he would receive over the next nine months. The group arrived in the Confederate capital at about eleven in the morning, on March 2, to find the streets "thronged with men, women and children" who "heaped upon us all the abuse and insults they were capable of doing."

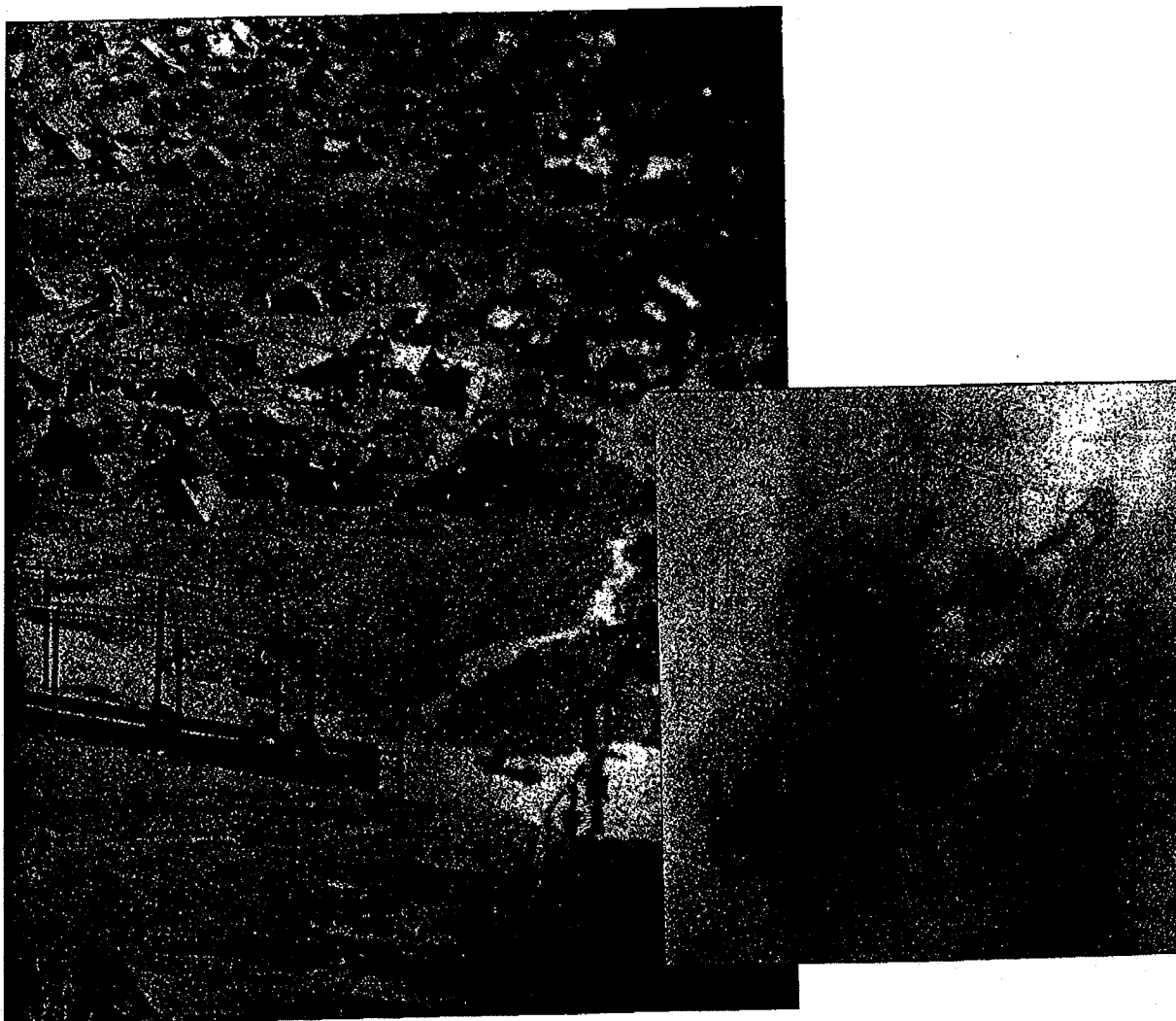
Unbeknownst to Dufur, a teenage boy had found on Dahlgren's body papers that allegedly disclosed the raiders' intent to kill Jefferson Davis and all his cabinet officers. Word of the aborted assassinations spread quickly through Richmond, and local papers announced the capture of "desperadoes, who, for the last three days had been amusing themselves by burning buildings and murdering defenceless women and

children." They would soon be hanged, the papers predicted. Everyone was incensed. Dufur was startled when even women used "insulting and profane language" as the group of weary prisoners trudged slowly through the streets. Small boys were calling out, "Free carriage to the Libby Hotel! Right this way to the Libby!"

The Libby Hotel was Libby Prison, but the Union captives were taken instead to an old slave pen known as Castle Thunder and then on to a three-story brick former tobacco warehouse known as the Pemberton Building. Fortune again smiled on Dufur: Two of his own Company B who had also been captured—Milo Farnsworth and Frank B. Jocelyn—were there, and they helped him mount the stairs to the second floor. Here, they were searched

and questioned. Around his waist Dufur carried a leather belt that contained five dollars in "greenbacks" and sixteen silver half-dollars he had bought in Canada while on furlough two weeks earlier. They were confiscated. The only money that he was able to save was a twenty-dollar bill he popped into his mouth when he saw that money, watches, knives, overcoats, and boots were being taken from prisoners.

And then he made "a great mistake." A Confederate officer asked him what command he belonged to. Dufur was certain that saying he was with Kilpatrick—"whom they feared and disliked"—would cause resentment. So he said he was with Dahlgren's command, as indeed he had been when the raid first began. Dufur was immediately separated from the other prisoners. Still



REMIAN MAREK/GETTY IMAGES; LEM WALLACE STUDY, CHAMPAGNEVILLE, PA.



This photograph of Simeon M. Dufur was taken 15 days before his capture.

unaware of the consequences of his error, he went up to the commander of the guards, an infamous brute by the name of Dick Turner, a slave whipper by profession, who was making his rounds, "swearing at, and kicking any sick or lame prisoner who chanced to be in his way." Dufur asked for a pair of crutches. "No," Turner growled back, "you will be in h--l with your commanding officer before you will have a chance to use them."

Dufur feared for his life. The "false reports" about Dahlgren "would so agitate and excite the people" that he would indeed be hanged. His fear was reinforced by the fact that he and five other Dahlgren troopers were kept isolated from the rest of the prisoners.

Then, on the fourth day of their captivity, everyone was taken to Libby Prison. After an overnight stay, they were transported to nearby Belle Island, a crowded compound of filthy, vermin-ridden tents, in the midst of the James River. Among the "starved, sick, dirty and emaciated human beings" who came out to greet the new prisoners was a neighbor of Dufur's from Vermont, George Hull, his tent-mate until Hull's capture at Brandy Station several months earlier. Hull confirmed Dufur's fears that all the captured Dahlgren men "were going to

be hanged or shot." The only hope of escape was to "flank in"—covertly join—a group of 600 prisoners being transferred from Belle Island to a new prison the Confederates were building outside Americus, Georgia.

As luck would have it, a New York soldier by the name of Sybley, one of the chosen 600 and a messmate of Hull's, had died. But his death had not been reported, and his comrades were still drawing his food ration—a common ploy of prisoners when they could get away with it. Hull suggested that "Sime," as Dufur was called, answer to Sybley's name at roll call.

All of Dufur's clothing had been taken from him except for his pants and shirt. His only other "valuables" were an old coarse woolen hat that a "sympathetic Johnny" had given him after taking his own hat, and a small pocket diary and a stubby pencil that he used to write in it each day ("March 2nd. Taken prisoner last night. I am badly wounded. . . . What misery I behold"). Hoping to pass for one of the bedraggled Belle Island inmates, he smeared his face and arms with coal dust, ripped one of his shirtsleeves, and tossed the remnants of a filthy army blanket over his shoulders. He took Sybley's place as the 600 passed, one by one, through the prison gate.

"The dreaded Dick Turner" was stationed at the narrow gateway, and despite "all the thrilling experiences" Dufur had been through in two years of warfare, "none could compare with the indescribable and hopeless feeling that took possession of me as I glanced at the hardened, heartless wretch." The suspense turned to terror when Turner recognized the man in front of Dufur as one of the Dahlgren raiders. Turner grabbed a musket from one of the guards and clubbed the man to the ground, then thrust its bayonet into his thigh. He kicked the wounded prisoner as the man crawled back into the camp on his hands and knees. Holding his breath, certain that his life was at stake, Dufur started through the gate. He was not detected.

The prisoners were again taken to Libby Prison for an overnight stay, and when Turner suddenly reappeared, looking them over once again, Dufur

believed his "doom was sealed." He gave Hull a message to convey to his friends at home. But his luck held—Turner again failed to notice him. (Fortune also smiled on the rest of the Dahlgren raiders. In good part because of Robert E. Lee's advice, none of the captured cavalymen were executed; Lee, who doubted the validity of the papers found on Dahlgren's body, warned that the Union might retaliate against Southern prisoners it held if the men were hanged.)

Sometime around midnight of the second night, each of the 600 men in Dufur's group was handed a two-pound loaf of corn bread, which, with some raw corn and a few hardtack biscuits they were later given, was all they would have until they reached Georgia. To avoid arousing the ire of hostile residents, they were then led through the darkened, deserted streets of Richmond to the train station. There they were herded into ten freight cars, sixty men to a car, with little more than four square feet for each man. A Rebel officer remarked, "You can pack as many Yanks into a car as you can clapboards."

The 900-mile trip took five days. The prisoners were crammed into the suffocating cars for the entire journey except for one brief respite outside a small station in South Carolina, where they were allowed out to exercise. Dufur, his limb fearfully swollen, was able to keep it slung up on the side of the car. Four prisoners tried to escape, but only one of them succeeded; the rest were shot. In addition, three men in Dufur's cramped car died on the way.

The prison compound into which Dufur had deceived his way would become the most dreaded Southern prison of all, Andersonville, where the death toll from three plagues—disease, diet, and the "deadline"—outstripped that of any other prison, North or South. The odds were slim that a wounded Union soldier such as Dufur would survive in any Confederate prison—but especially so in that place. Neither side in the Civil War had expected a long-drawn-out conflict, and at first no provisions had been made for taking prisoners. The exchange of captured troops was attempted in the be-

ginning, and a cartel to handle the arrangements was established. But as the war dragged on, a dispute arose over the South's handling of black Union troops who were captured, and the federal government became reluctant to parole able-bodied Southerners who might return to the fighting lines.

The result was a burgeoning prison population on both sides, particularly as the armies of Grant and Sherman attacked the Confederacy without respite in 1864. They were confined in a hodgepodge collection of prisons—fortifications such as Castle Pinckney in the South or Fort Lafayette in New York Harbor, federal and state penitentiaries, converted buildings, warehouses, enclosed barracks, and, worst of all in the South, open stockades such as Andersonville. Faced with shortages of vital materials because of its war effort, the South in particular could never stock its prisons with basic amounts of foodstuffs, medical supplies, and wood for fuel and shelter.

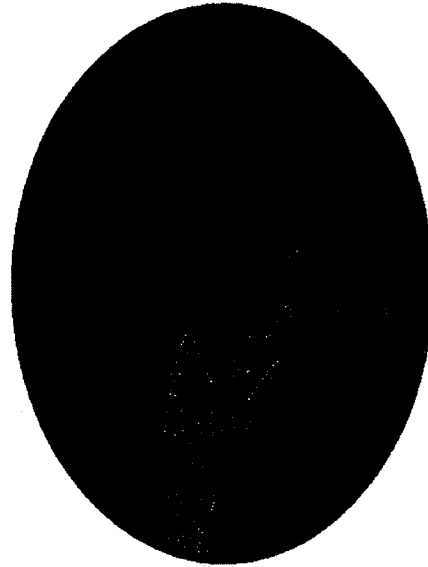
In all, during the war, an astounding 408,000 men—nearly 194,000 Northerners and some 215,000 Southerners—were captured and confined in such prisons. Of them, 56,000 men—more than 30,000 Northerners and about 26,000 Southerners—died. Two of every five Union soldiers who died in prison camps in the South—approximately 13,000 men in all—perished in Andersonville. Its death rate was an incredible 29 percent. That Dufur survived is a testament to his ingenuity, fortitude, belief in God, and, in no small measure, luck. He was one of the rare few wounded soldiers who lived to record his tale, and he did so in great detail day by day. But the memories of those events would cripple him for life.

Dufur and his fellow prisoners lined up inside the gate of Andersonville, where they were greeted by the notorious Henry Wirz, who was in command of the interior of the prison. Much has been written about Wirz, a Swiss-German physician who rose rapidly in Confederate service from being a private to supervising this new compound. His detractors—and they are legion—blame him for the terrible loss of life at Andersonville. His defenders, though few, insist that the Rebel government

was responsible for the horrors at the prison, and that because of his authoritarian, efficient manner, haughty behavior, and foreign accent, Wirz was singled out as a scapegoat and held responsible for every cruel event that transpired. Like all the prisoners in Andersonville, Dufur was a detractor. Wirz was a "little, swearing, swaggering hump-backed Captain" who "gave us thoroughly to understand that should we attempt an escape, we would meet with instant death; and to emphasize his cowardly threat, he shook his revolver in our faces."

Andersonville had just been completed, so there were still remnants of wood lying about the camp that could be used for cooking. Later, wood for cooking or for fires to keep warm would become a luxury. The stockade at the beginning, before it was enlarged to accommodate an ever-increasing prison population, covered about fifteen acres of land on two hillsides. A sluggish brook that ran through its center from west to east was bordered by a mosquito-infested swamp of several acres. There were thirty-two sentry boxes around the camp's perimeter, and after nine o'clock in the evening a guard would call out the time every thirty minutes. Each morning at six, a pack of twelve bloodhounds headed by "Old Spot" was led around the prison walls. The owner of the dogs was paid for each escaped prisoner he tracked down. It would later be charged that Wirz let the dogs kill them.

In time a "deadline," a two-foot-high wooden railing, was installed several feet inside the stockade's perimeter, and anyone setting foot over it was instantly shot by one of the guards—who, according to prison rumor, then received a furlough as a reward. Georgia militiamen—some as young as ten years old, others as ancient as seventy-five—had replaced as guards the veteran army regulars, who were needed at the front. Their attitude toward the prisoners was frightening. They were undisciplined, hated Yankees, and were too ready to assume that a prisoner might attempt an escape. Dufur saw several prisoners shot to death by the trigger-happy sentries—one a man reaching with his hand under the dead-



Imprisonment left Dufur a thin, nervous man. Here he is at about age 59 in 1902.

line for a chip of wood, others for trying to fill their cups with water.

In all, 300 inmates were said to have been killed at the deadline. One was a crippled prisoner who had lost his leg and all hope of ever surviving the rigors of prison life. He purposely crossed the line, sat on the ground, lay his crutches by his side, and folded his arms, waiting to be killed. Seeing what was about to happen, Dufur closed his eyes, not reopening them until he heard the shot ring out. Dufur himself received a flesh wound when one prisoner complained to a guard about being made to stand in the hot sun while waiting to carry the sick to the hospital. The guard got angry and fired at the prisoner. The bullet went through his body and grazed Dufur, who was standing next to him, on his left hip, just cutting the skin.

Dufur and twelve other Vermont "boys"—eight of them from his own company—slept together on a parcel of ground about thirty feet square near the camp's south gate. George Hull, Milo Farnsworth, and Frank Jocelyn were members of the "mess." Rather than drink from the brook—which became filled with "floating grease and offal"—they dug a well twenty-three feet deep. They also dug shelters into the ground, covering them with bits of

cloth or blanket, and huddled together to keep warm.

The south gate was a busy spot. During the rest of March and April, many prisoners from camps up north were transported to Andersonville, and the Vermonters watched for friends as the newcomers staggered into camp. Dufur thought they looked forlorn: "Poor fellows! May God help them." On the other hand, the arriving prisoners were shocked at what they saw. It was worse than anything they had already experienced. "Is this hell?" they asked as they entered the gate.

The advantage to the Vermonters' location was that each morning the dead were stacked by the south gate for burial outside. Men detailed to carry the bodies to mass graves beyond the stockade received extra rations, and also the opportunity to bring back wood from the roadside for fuel. On the debit side was the smell. One morning Dufur counted more than 200 bodies at the gate, "and as they lay exposed to the hot sun, the effect can better be imagined than described." Later, a "dead house" was built to store the bodies until they could be buried.

Wood for building shelters was nonexistent, chiefly because Southern contractors could earn more by selling timber to private businessmen than the Confederate government was willing to pay. Every root of the mammoth pine trees that once covered the camp was dug up and used for fuel. Dufur was convinced that more than half the deaths in Andersonville were caused by the need of wood "to protect us from the heat, cold and storm." The irony was that an immense forest of pines was nearby.

Food was always scarce. At first the ration was one pint of unsifted cornmeal or flour a day; later, a "mush" that had been cooked "without salt, but not without filth of almost every conceivable kind," including such "seasonings" as "flies, bugs, whole kernels of corn, piece of bark, ashes, coals, hairs, etc." Dufur believed that the filth—"of the vilest and most outrageous kind that the human mind can conceive"—was "purposely added."

A good part of each prisoner's day was spent in collecting and cooking his

ration. Dufur at first used his woolen hat and mixed the cornmeal with water to make "a sort of dough" that he then placed on a pine chip near a fire. He finally parted with his secreted twenty-dollar bill, purchasing from another inmate two old oyster cans and a canteen. He shared this largess with Hull, who owned about two-thirds of an army blanket. Together, they stretched the blanket on four sticks to make a tent for themselves. It protected them from the sun, but not from the rain. When they were not cooking, they were guarding their new utensils so they would not be stolen.

What always amazed Dufur was the variety of businesses carried on in the camp despite all the deprivations. Prisoners sold or bartered the simplest items. Some would sell the clothes from their backs or the shoes from their feet for an extra ration of cornmeal or perhaps even some of the infrequently doled-out bacon. Somehow, someone had smuggled a few razors into the camp, and as a result there were several barbershops. A haircut cost either ten chews of tobacco, five cents Federal, or one dollar Confederate, depending on what the prisoner could cough up. Beer made out of cornmeal, water, "blackstrap" molasses, and one or two other trifling ingredients" was sold at no less than fifty places around the camp. Aiming to improve his "financial affairs," Dufur took a store of hoarded cornmeal and flour and baked it into pancakes, then set up a little stand on a wooden plank and hawked them. He had sold about a fourth of them when hunger got the better of him and he made the "financial mistake" of eating "everything but the shingle!" At that point he decided to "retire from business."

Starvation led to stealing, a major problem. Hungry inmates, driven to desperation or mentally unbalanced, robbed their comrades of food or of wood and bits of clothing that they could exchange for food. Worse still was a gang of more than 100 New York troops who preyed on the ill and weak. They were called "Mosby's Raiders," after the well-known Confederate partisan ranger. Dufur had so little that most of the time they didn't bother

him. But once, when he tried to swap his daily cornmeal ration for some flour, one of the Raiders, "a pug-nose, pugilistic ruffian," lured him into a tent and without the least compunction forced him to surrender his scant ration. When Dufur protested, the man knocked him down and kicked him.

Dufur had the satisfaction of seeing the gang broken up that July after a prisoner finally complained to Wirz about the Raiders. Dufur was sure that Wirz responded—allowing the prisoners to set up their own jury and run the bandits through a gauntlet—because the informant was German-born. Six of the ringleaders were convicted of murder and robbery. The entire camp watched as meal sacks were drawn over their heads and they were hanged from a makeshift scaffold erected within the camp. When the rope around his neck broke, one of the ringleaders fell to the ground, pleading for his life, but he was strung up again.

When Dufur arrived at Andersonville in mid-March of 1864, a first group of 600 other prisoners had already been lodged there. His group brought the total to more than a thousand inmates. The number ballooned within days. By the end of March, the prison population stood at 7,500; in April, 10,000; in May, 15,000; in June, more than 22,000. By July, after the prison had been expanded to twenty-six acres, 29,000 captured Federal troops were incarcerated in the still woefully inadequate compound. And by the end of August, there were 33,000 men confined there without shelter in the fierce summer sun. The ground was too hot to walk upon without cover for the soles of the feet. Sunstroke and blindness were common, and dysentery, infection, and scurvy were rampant.

Fatalities increased concomitantly with the increase in the number of prisoners and the rising summer temperatures. In March, when the prison first opened, 283 had died; in April, 576; in May, 708; in June, 1,201; in July, 1,817; and in August, the peak month for fatalities, 2,993. In all, the deaths of 10,000 prisoners were attributed by federal authorities to bad food and water, while a thousand more died of "fetid and noxious exhalations" from

the decaying bodies of their comrades. Especially gruesome to Dufur were those men stricken with scurvy. Their legs swelled up and "the flesh discolored, as if it had been beaten with clubs." Victims suffered intense pain if bones were affected. If the disease reached the mouth, teeth separated from gums and fell out. Dufur saw "hundreds of cases" where men "actually starved to death, because they were unable to eat the coarse food."

At one point, the report of smallpox in the camp prompted a prison doctor to inoculate several hundred inmates, Dufur among them. The vaccine left his arm sore for a year. He ever afterward bore a scar "as large as a silver twenty-five cent piece," and almost a half century later still felt a "sharp stinging pain" every now and then. Dufur was convinced the vaccine was poisoned. He saw a sore break out under the arm of one man. It ate "into his vitals," opening a wound so large that a hand could be put inside it. "It was nothing strange," he said, to see one of the vaccinated men "with his arm half or two-thirds eaten off, the bare cords exposed to view, and only dry, dark colored skin covering the bone."

However, the most pitiful prisoners, Dufur thought, were blacks and Indians. Some twenty-five black soldiers from a Massachusetts unit who had survived the Fort Pillow massacre that April were brought into Andersonville with their white major. Although the prison camp was for enlisted men only, "the rebs" considered this officer "no better," and when he asked to have a severe leg wound bandaged, Dufur "heard the medical gentleman tell him to go to his niggers and get his wound dressed." Another doctor refused to extract a spent minié ball that had lodged in a black trooper's skull. One black prisoner, a slave who had escaped eight years earlier, was reclaimed by his master. But it was the Indian prisoners who drew Dufur's sympathy the most. About ten or fifteen of them attached to a western regiment died in less than ninety days: "The confinement was what they could not stand."

Miraculously, Dufur's foot got better, and some rheumatism he had suffered disappeared, though he still walked

with a limp. He attributed the amazing recovery to the warm weather. His fellow Vermonters were not so fortunate. During July and August, when the heat became "almost unbearable," Milo Farnsworth took ill. About eighteen years old, Farnsworth had been in the regiment only three weeks when he was captured. Dufur slept next to him, and one night, after fixing him a little water gruel for supper, Dufur lay down to sleep. About half past one in the morning, Dufur heard the guard on the wall call out the hour. Because they were packed into the small space so tightly, he asked Farnsworth to turn from his right side to his left, which he did, and asked his ill friend how he felt. "O better, I think," Farnsworth answered. At three o'clock, as the guard again called out the hour, Dufur once more asked Farnsworth how he felt. This time there was no reply. "I lay my hand upon his face, and saw at once that the messenger Death had again visited our unhappy home."

Dufur quietly woke up the rest of the Vermonters to inform them of Farnsworth's death so they would guard the body. Otherwise, somebody else might make off with it, and they would lose the chance to carry it out of the camp and bring back wood. Frank Jocelyn died, too, and Hull came down with scurvy. Within six months, eight of the thirteen members of the Vermont "mess" were dead.

The only hope for survival, it seemed, was escape. The deadline, armed sentries, and bloodhounds ruled out any direct method. One Federal trooper ingeniously got out by pretending to be dead; he was carried to the dead house, and he left a little slip of white paper to indicate he had escaped from it before being buried. The favored method of escape, though, was a tunnel. Dufur knew of "quite a number" who tried tunneling out. Using their hands and impromptu tools made of old shovel blades or split canteens, many prisoners tried to dig their way under the stockade wall. It was arduous, time-consuming work. Hidden underneath a blanket roof, only one man at a time could dig in the narrow confine. Few succeeded. One prisoner came out beyond the stockade but right

in the midst of two guards playing cards. More often than not, the tunnel walls caved in.

To deter escape attempts, the Confederate authorities often spread the word that a prisoner exchange was in the offing. Such a hope permeated the camp on September 6, when six detachments of men were told to pack and be ready to leave. By then, more than 7,000 Union prisoners lay dead in unmarked graves. Dufur was among the selected few. A train took the men to Charleston, where, camped at the water's edge, they could plainly see Fort Sumter and nearby Morris Island, from which Union cannoners were bombarding the city. An unexpected dividend was the opportunity to wade into the sea to search for oysters.

As Dufur quickly learned, however, there was no prisoner exchange contemplated. Instead, to relieve overcrowding at Andersonville, the men were being shipped to a new stockade under construction at Florence, South Carolina. They arrived there on September 17, but the camp was not ready to receive them. Dufur could see slaves still working on it. The prisoners camped near woods, surrounded by guards and covered by two cannon. With Dufur was his friend Hull.

They were still there three days later—a dull, cloudy, drizzly day—when there was a commotion near the woods. Suddenly there were shots. Some prisoners were trying to escape and had already overturned the two pieces of artillery. The rest of the prisoners surged in the direction of the firing in a way that reminded Dufur of the "breaking away of a boom strung across a river allowing a large quantity of logs to slowly move down the stream." Within five minutes, anyone who could run had fled.

Dufur and Hull made for the woods, but they soon became separated. By chance, Dufur ran into a man named Orange Ayers, who was from a Wisconsin regiment and, it turned out, used to live in Enosburgh, Vermont, near Dufur's home. They decided to stick together, hoping to follow the North Star toward Union lines. Dufur had no shoes, but his feet were so hardened by exposure at Andersonville that his suf-

fering at first, though "intense," was bearable. The chill was worse. All he had to wear were the remnants of the pants and shirt in which he had been captured eight months earlier—not enough "for a gun wad." For food, the two men had only a half pound of corn bread that Ayers had stashed away in an old rag. Within hours, Dufur's feet and knees were bleeding, but what he wor-

ried about most was stepping on a snake in the dark.

With the help of blacks, Dufur and Ayers were able to remain free for nine days, though there were many close calls. They pretended to be teamsters attached to the Confederate army, but a band of bushwhackers looked at their tattered clothing with suspicion and decided to take them in. Dufur and

Ayers escaped from them when the bushwhackers held a drunken party and their hut caught fire. A friendly free black named Johnson, whose wife and children were slaves, gave them food and shelter for several days and bandaged Dufur's sore feet. Johnson also offered Dufur an old pair of shoes, but his feet were too swollen to get into them. Slaves came by to give them food and pray for the two Northerners, ignoring the warning "not to feed any Yankee, for after eating his food a Yankee would murder a black man merely for the fun of it." Dufur and Ayers succeeded in eluding one Confederate search party by hiding in a slave hut, but they were finally tracked down by bloodhounds and brought back to the Florence stockade.

There were eventually about 12,000 men in the prison camp, which was laid out in the same fashion as Andersonville and surrounded by the same kind of guard posts, though the stockade was only half as large. Three sheds were erected inside the camp to handle the seriously ill, but none of them had walls. Dufur, who camped within 200 feet of the sheds, could not escape "the shrieks of those who were bereft of reason, the moans of the dying." It got so bad that he would move to another part of the compound "and there remain for hours, to escape the heart-thrilling moans of the dying."

The Southerners were so sure the captured soldiers held Abraham Lincoln responsible for holding up the exchange of prisoners that they let the men hold a mock vote for president in November 1864. Black and white beans were handed out—black for Lincoln, white for George B. McClellan—and the men were told to drop one into sacks by the gate. To their chagrin, the majority of beans counted were black.

Dufur's cavalry tentmate, Hull, had also been recaptured, but on November 27 word spread that there was to be a parole—a rumor that for once proved true—and Hull was one of the 400 men chosen to be released. Dufur was devastated. He was the only one of the thirteen Vermont men who was still alive and in prison. He wrote a despairing letter home to his mother on a piece of white birch bark and gave it to Hull. He



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Henry Wirz, the notorious commandant under whose administration the prison death rate soared to 29 percent, was hanged by a vindictive North after the war.

then sat on the ground, his face buried in his hands, thinking about the "old Green Mountain State" and his "present sad condition." A Methodist, he searched his faith for consolation. It was a moment of testing. "Must I die in this dreadful place?" Dufur asked himself. "No!" he exclaimed out loud. "No, I cannot."

A backwoodsman from the 5th Michigan Cavalry, Frank McGee, happened to be passing by as Dufur shouted. McGee—who had "a large heart" and "could even find enjoyment in the toothache"—stopped, and soon had Dufur laughing. They became partners, sharing what little each possessed. McGee "owned" a parcel of ground that he had traded some Jersey soldiers for, giving them five buttons and four chews of tobacco. Together, the two men made bricks out of clay from the bed of the stream that ran through the camp. They stretched a blanket over their "house" for a roof.

One night, a torrential rain struck the camp. The storm was terrible. Prisoners pressed close to each other to keep their nearly nude bodies from freezing. They stood with their backs to the howling gale, their hands over their ears "so that the shrieks and moans of the dying might not be heard." The storm abated by dawn, leaving the prison looking like "a hard fought battle-field." More than 200 men lay dead, "on their backs, their arms extended, hands white and wrinkled from long exposure to the rain, their long hair beaten into the sand, and the eye-balls covered with sand and dirt." The brick shelter Dufur and McGee had built had completely melted.

The two friends now spent many a night "to roost," standing with crowds of anywhere from 25 to 200 men, their bodies pressed together to keep warm. The United States Sanitary Commission—a forerunner of the Red Cross—had sent food and clothing to the camp, but the articles had been distributed without any sense of need. Dufur, who could have used, among other things, new pants and a shirt, was given a hat. He traded it for a peck of sweet potatoes, which he and McGee buried; but a thief dug a hole and stole them during the night while they slept.

A few days after the big storm, the prisoners' ration—a pint of cornmeal a day—was stopped. The Confederates had heard that a tunnel was being dug and announced that they wouldn't restore the ration until it was found. By the third day without food, some prisoners "showed signs of insanity," and extra guards were put on duty. Despite their desperation, no prisoner divulged the location of the tunnel, and that afternoon the ration—still only one pint—was restored.

Dufur was finally paroled in January 1865, but only by telling a lie. The Confederates were choosing men who had been in prison the longest and whose term of service had expired. By then, Dufur had spent nine months confined, but his term of enlistment had two more years to run. Besides, he had once heard an Andersonville official say, "The cavalry raiders are not likely to be the first to be paroled, as they were anxious to get into this country, let them remain until they are satisfied." When questioned, Dufur kept silent about his unit and said his term was up, so he was chosen as one of 600 inmates to be freed. A friend of his from Andersonville who was among the selected had lost ninety pounds, and McGee jokingly remarked that Dufur himself was so thin that he most likely wasn't even counted because he couldn't be seen.

The men were taken to Charleston and waited to board special relief vessels in the harbor. Death still pursued them. Three or four men died on the way, and as the rest boarded a boat to convey them to the ships, six "of our comrades, with their faces towards home and the flag they loved," lay on the wharf "stark and cold in death. This seemed terrible indeed, to die within sight of home, as it were, after passing through months of indescribable suffering." Aboard the transport, the quartermaster made the mistake of issuing double rations to the hungry captives. Many got sick from overeating, and two or three more men died.

Dufur was not mustered out of service until June 21, 1865, after the war was over, but his prison experiences haunted him the rest of his life. He returned to Vermont and made his

home in Richford, near Fairfield. It is not known whether he took any satisfaction in the knowledge that Henry Wirz was hanged for the ill-treatment and murder of Northern prisoners—the only Confederate prison official who was executed.

Dufur never married, though he had left a girlfriend in Fairfield when he went off to war and once had gone AWOL to visit her. He lived instead with another bachelor. What he did at first for a living is not known. (What little is known about him has been compiled by Rhoda Berger and William Roley of Richford.) He eventually received a government pension, and in 1896 opened a grocery store, but it folded within six months.

Dufur used to hang around a livery stable in Richford and tell stories and do card tricks. Old-timers remembered that he was always on the thin side, very nervous, and had shaking fits. When he got the shakes, he would take out a jar of morphine and put a small amount of the drug on his tongue and swallow it. He was also always afraid of fires, and purposely kept a large washbasin filled with firecrackers in his cottage, figuring they would act like an alarm if set off by a fire.

When Dufur was in his late fifties, friends persuaded him to write his memoirs. He hawked the book, *Over the Dead Line or Tracked by Blood-Hounds*, at local fairs. Five hundred copies of it were left and auctioned off after he died in his home on November 25, 1911, in his late sixties. He was buried in Hillside, New Hampshire, where his sisters resided.

"God bless and protect you, my boy. Oh how I shall see you in my dreams lying wounded upon the battle-field," Dufur's mother had prophetically said as the seventeen-year-old went off to war in 1862. "Remember, my son, that should it thus be, you can not call upon your father and mother for help, but you can call upon your God."

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