themselves, so often assume. On the contrary it can be lively and entertaining literature. Although his subject has an inherent appeal all its own, the author’s flair with words is noteworthy. While employing the analytical approach of the “social scientist,” he has also managed to set forth the narrative, the broad patterns of development, conclusions, and insights in a vivid, imaginative style — a combination all too rare in historical writing.

A comprehensive treatment of patent medicines in this country, an important chapter in American social, intellectual, and medical history, *The Toadstool Millionaires* also provides a good indirect commentary on the human predicament, the enduring thread of irrationality.

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This 57-page pamphlet, which is Number 14 of the Library Series of the University of Kansas Publications, contains much interesting information about prison conditions in the Southern Confederacy, and also about the life of Colonel John Fraser, who had had a distinguished career as a scholar and teacher before the war, and was to become an educational administrator at several institutions afterwards.

It is astonishing how many institutions of learning Colonel Fraser was connected with: two in Scotland, one in Bermuda, one in New York, and two in Pennsylvania before his military duty, and later two more in Pennsylvania, and two in Kansas. For six years he was Chancellor of the University of Kansas and for two years he was State Superintendent of Public Instruction of Kansas. His Civil War career, however, revolved around his professorship of mathematics at Jefferson College at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, from 1855 to 1862. It was from this community that he raised a company of volunteers in the summer of 1862, and it was to this
community that he returned after half-a-dozen battles, and perhaps even more harrowing experiences in Confederate prison camps.

The material is all here, but it is loosely organized. Pages 1-25 describe Fraser's pre-war and wartime careers. Pages 27-30 contain the Petition. The next six pages comprise a list of names, and the footnotes complete the last twenty pages. If a reader is looking for biographical data, he will find Fraser's post-war years summarized in footnote 13, on page 39. There is no continuity in the presentation. The subject dealt with most fully is prison conditions, and this is the pamphlet's chief contribution.

Although Fraser's descriptions are moderate ("The gravity of our case has made us very careful that an action in the premises should not be impaired by exaggeration or abuse."), the facts in themselves are appalling. At Camp Sorghum there were 1300 Union officers in an open field, without shelter, with poor water and sanitary facilities, and with almost no tools. Cooking utensils were so scarce that most of the men were unable to cook breakfast until afternoon. Food was inadequate; mail was not delivered (in one case) for forty days. In this situation, according to the testimony of others, Col. Fraser earned the undying gratitude of his companions by acting out plays of Shakespeare from memory, "bareheaded and barefooted and with no clothing but a ragged shirt and torn pantaloons." Perhaps a man of this calibre deserves a full-length biography.

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JOHN M. COLEMAN


This is a superior book, with the proper title and by a recognized researcher and writer. It is remarkably free from pretense. The jacket statement by the publishers is excellent. The author's preface, though not profound, is adequate and sound.

The content of the volume corresponds faithfully with the title. The result is unity of treatment. In such hewing to the line more relevant historical matters of great importance are necessarily given summary statement only.