Books You Might Like

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Abstract

(Editor’s Note: BOOKS & COKES, sponsored by SKETCH, presents regular weekly student-planned and student-presented book reviews in the Oak Room in the Memorial Union throughout fall and spring Quarters. Supplementing that program, here are brief, student endorsements of more of the current books they've liked.)...
BALZAC, Stefan Zweig, Viking Press, 1946.

Even for those who don’t ordinarily like biographies, this one can’t help but be interesting—with a capital I. This is due partly to Stefan Zweig’s approach, but mostly to the wild individualism of Honore Balzac himself.

Balzac, as an insignificant, ugly, fat 19th century Frenchman, was resolved to raise himself above his bourgeois level, both financially and in prestige. He was determined to become the greatest French writer of his time and to, somehow, “marry a rich widow and live happily ever after.”

He became virtually a slave to his writing, working all day and most of the night for weeks on end, filling his spare minutes with a passionate and promiscuous love life.

Too much work, though it resulted in an unequaled record of masterpieces, brought him a premature death, ironically, just after he had married his rich widow.

One doesn’t forget Balzac soon. His was a frustrated genius so individual that the world will never find another like him.


Before you read very far into Mr. Johnson’s 500-odd pages of words about words, you are inclined to be hyper-critical of the wording of your most secret thoughts. Seeing individual confusion and maladjustment as symptomatic of this perilous scientific era, Mr. Johnson suggests, among other things, that behavior can hardly be “normal” when we consistently refuse to state simple things simply.

Of particular interest to earnest students of science is the steady piling-up of taken-for-granted evidence proving how dependent all the sciences are upon words for their very exist-
ence. Why then, Mr. Johnson asks, do we persist in an unscientific approach to the role of language? Human pace will inevitably lag behind scientific progress unless and until the science of semantics is taken into serious consideration—and applied.

It is a matter of delight to note that Mr. Johnson frequently becomes entangled in the web of his own spinning, for alas, he must resort to words to explain words.

A book good for a lot of chuckles, but one you'd best avoid if you're easily distracted.


"Booze is your wife, that's who you're married to."

I think you will find yourself fighting throughout this book to bring Joseph Patrick (Rags) Murphy, the habitual drunkard, back to a respectable life. You'll clutch at every straw of hope as he comes into his "up" cycle, and pray he'll resist the "down" turns. So, through most of the story, you're on this roller-coaster, "up" and "down" with handsome Rags Murphy, whom you can't help liking in spite of your better judgment. Nor can you fail to see what attracts so many women to him, or why this problem is greater than this one "case" represents. But watch yourself, or by the time you finish the book you'll be looking for the local chapter of W.C.T.U. or seeking membership to alcoholics anonymous.

The book was featured as the August Book-of-the-Month Club selection and received considerable notice from the critics.

—Terry Hallagan, Sci. Sr.