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tinguished and in which, for all practical
purposes, Dr. Modesto's doctrine of cen-
tralism prevails. Finally, the social appara-
tus by which control is exercised has been
cleverly engineered through the public rela-
tions of one Paul Peacock, who is in effect
the ruler of the world—and a secret
psychopath.

The novel is organized around the trial of
Peacock, who has been charged with abus-
ing his nearly unlimited power. Chief wit-
ness for the prosecution is Arthur Franklin,
a former public relations associate of Pea-
cock's and, back in the dim beginnings of
the Age of Immortality, the first man on
whom the gift of eternity was bestowed.
From the outset, it is evident that Franklin,
the protagonist and the witness to count-
less abuses by Peacock, has had his mem-
ory tampered with. Revived from his deep
freeze sleep for the trial, Franklin struggles
with the past. His memories—imperfect,
rather sinisterly edited by Peacock's peo-
ple, and supplemented incompletely from
other sources—make up the bulk of the
book.

What we get from Arthur Franklin is a
kind of bird's-eye view of the world's cha-
otic transition to immortality—and in this
way, *Paradise I* often seems more a chroni-
cle than a novel. In such a period of tur-
moil, charlatans and manipulators such as
Peacock are free to work on the public.
And as Harrington tells us, that is where
the danger lies: Immortality is on its way
(he means it), and if we don't prepare for it,
then the Paul Peacocks of this world will.
They will preside over an infinity that is, by
Arthur Franklin's description, "a school, a
prison, an experimental laboratory...a
hospital." ●

Books in Brief

Splendid Lives

by Penelope Gilliatt
Coward, McCann & Geoghegan
147 pp., \$7.95

There are lots of old English people in
Splendid Lives, Penelope Gilliatt's collec-
tion of short stories, and they suffer mostly
from too much splendidness. Performing
courageous, conscionable, and gallantly
desperate acts, the characters are splendid.
But to be seen as such and as little else—
without bile, for example, or neurosis—is
to be seen partially and sentimentally. The
characters' excesses of goodness and

wisdom too often look like consolation
prizes for having to be old. Imagine an un-
critical, praise-filled biography of Bertrand
Russell called *Splendid Bertie*, and you
have some insight into Gilliatt's perspective
on her aged characters.

Several of the stories are nonetheless af-
fecting and convincing. The two best,
"The Sports Chemist" and "Catering"—
which are not about the elderly—first ap-
peared in *The New Yorker*. The sports
chemist, a "weedy" survivor, rescues his
athletic lover from drowning and proves
that "heroism lies in not being as weak as
at other times." In "Catering," every sur-
face of Mrs. Pope's house, every brain cell,
is occupied with the making of weddings—
at "ten pounds net." The psychology of
downstairs is conveyed in "Catering"
largely through Gilliatt's brilliant inventory
of foods and obsessive tasks: Thursday's
double turkey roast, Friday's "fancies"
making, Sunday's icing of the cake. But the
fervor and the silliness of those who cater,
even when they happen to live upstairs, are
never ridiculed. The gentle ironies of
Splendid Lives are all at the expense of cir-
cumstance, not of people.

—LAURIE STONE

Ferber: A Biography

by Julie Goldsmith Gilbert
Doubleday, 456 pp., \$10.50

"Although she was quite close to her
great-aunt," states the publisher's catalog,
"Ms. Gilbert is not blind to her faults."
And how. The Edna Ferber of this biogra-
phy is a selfish, bad-tempered person,
childishly attention-seeking, ungrateful,
and rude to her social inferiors. This im-
pression is heightened, and the reader's
sympathy forfeited, by the peculiar struc-
ture Gilbert has chosen. Perhaps in imita-
tion of Kaufman and Hart's *Merrily We
Roll Along*, she tells her story in reverse
chronological order, presenting us straight-
away with a nasty old lady and creating a
series of effects without causes, climaxes
without resonance (as when we are told
that Edna's mother died saying, "I ruined
your life" before we know what she had
done).

The larger problem, though, is what the
justification for such a book could be. As
Gilbert herself admits in her "epilogue"
(placed before chapter one), Edna Ferber is
no longer a popular favorite; she was never
well thought of by respected critics; and
she did not lead a glamorous life. The re-
sult is a biography patched together from
tedious, spiteful letters, newspaper re-

views, and cute childhood memories. There is also Gilbert's coy speculation about her great-aunt's sex life to contend with—her glee when she pounces on a likely candidate—and her distressing attempts to psychoanalyze the dead. She likes to write in tarted-up clichés, as when she says that “one really had to be up to the potent snuff that wafted around the [round] table,” conjuring up a picture of Dorothy Parker and Alexander Woolcott kicking the gong around.

Often she seems to be writing in a language that is not her native tongue—or anybody else's. When her great-aunt issued an invitation, Gilbert writes, “Oppenheimer would refuse in lieu of another appointment,” and Ferber's sister's life without her was “a fraught sort of freedom.”

My favorite of Gilbert's observations occurs in a list of Ferber's preferences in food: “She kept her potatoes simple.” And indeed, who among us could wish for a prettier epitaph? —RHODA KOENIG

Organizing for Peace: A Personal History of the Founding of the United Nations

by Clark M. Eichelberger
Harper & Row, 317 pp., \$15

The United Nations is almost as familiar to Americans as the Stars and Stripes; and like the flag, the U.N. is more honored nowadays as a symbol of political cooperation than as an instrument for achieving it. But this was not always so. For the U.N. was born of ardent hopes for the elimination of war and the advancement of the common interests of mankind. If these aims sound naive, it is because our moral will has faltered, not because the hopes were misguided. Or so Clark Eichelberger believes, and his personal record of a life dedicated to the ideals behind the U.N. bears persuasive evidence.

To be sure, the first experiment in international peace-keeping organization, the League of Nations, betrayed signs of loose idealism and political innocence. But Eichelberger was seized from the beginning by the league's promise of world peace and by the prospect of realizing it through a permanent institution. He worked within the league (even though the United States rejected membership) and tirelessly promoted its reputation, becoming close to presidents and ministers in the process. Then as World War II drew near, he knew the league must die and be replaced by a new and stronger organization, energized by the universal experience of a devastat-

ing war and framed by rigorous and experienced minds. Opposed to isolationism in both war and peace, Eichelberger's vigorous internationalism found a friend in FDR's humane pragmatism, and during the war, Eichelberger became deeply immersed in the Roosevelt administration's plans for the postwar world: hence the U.N. If Eichelberger's modest account of his contribution to the events and ideas that gave birth to the U.N. does nothing more, it proves that idealism can be tough-minded and that world peace can be pursued without illusions. —JAMES SLOAN ALLEN

A Vein of Riches

by John Knowles
Little, Brown, 343 pp., \$9.95

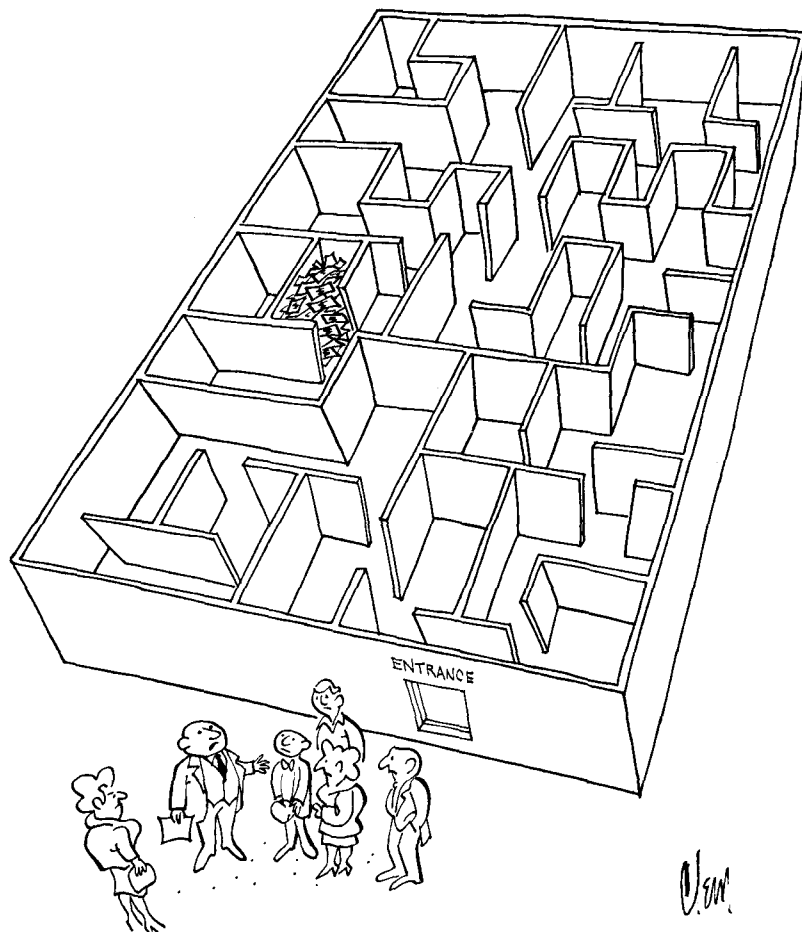
John Knowles, author of the highly acclaimed *A Separate Peace*, has now written a soap operatic historical novel about a coal baron's family in West Virginia that loses its money but discovers “things that really mean a lot more.” That *A Vein of Riches* refers not just to the novel's coal boom setting but also to these newly plumbed human feelings and values is a

point Knowles wants very badly for us not to miss: “God, I have a lot of deep feelings, he thought. It's something running right through me, very deeply, a vein or seam, all these feelings and caring and falling so deeply in love.”

By relentlessly spelling everything out, Knowles demonstrates little confidence in his own or in his readers' imagination. If he thinks we may miss a symbol, he identifies it for us: “Clarkson surveyed the scene, a formidable figure in his vested navy blue suit with high stiff collar, watch chain, all the symbols of business power.” When waxing allegorical, Knowles not only perpetrates clichés but sometimes capitalizes them: “It seemed to him that a door, the one opening on a room known as Good Clean Fun, was closing in his life.” And he even labels epiphanies: “These words broke over him with the force of an epiphany.”

When reading the first few pages of a novel as trite as this, one has a perverse feeling of comfort, a sensation that at least our sensibilities are not going to be taxed. After a while though, the experience becomes embarrassing and a bit depressing.

—JACK SULLIVAN



“As you know, your uncle left a rather unusual will.”