

A Brook Farm, French Style

KINGDOM OF THE ROCKS. By Consuelo de St. Exupéry. New York: Random House. 1946. 298 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by
CATHERINE MEREDITH BROWN

THAT mystic pursuit down Piccadilly made memorably ridiculous by Gilbert in his day seems heightened to absurdity in this year of grace. There's hardly room in the world we inhabit for withered lilies, for the pose, or for the velvet-coated esthete. The position of "the man of culture rare" seems highly untenable.

Antoine de Saint Exupéry represents, for all time, the true artist. His lofty spirit soared in phrase after phrase of pure beauty. That same spirit forced him into the fight for France, for the world's freedom. He gave his life for a good many unworthy souls. Perhaps that is always the hero's death. In his case the world lost a poet as well.

Consuelo, the young widow of St. Exupéry, writes of her refugee wanderings in France in the year 1943. Fleeing from the enemy in Paris to Marseilles, she meets a band of fellow artists. A sculptor herself, her sympathies naturally turn to the tenets of Bernard, *prix de Rome* architect.

Consuelo [he states] here is what I have come to understand; here is the whole thing, and it is very simple: when the world has crumbled, when there is nothing left but ruins, the only people who count are the workers—the artists, if you like—I mean those who know how to construct something, who can give men a sign, a form, a play of thought and imagination, a pattern and inspiration for the spirit that still leaves the spirit free.

I gladly accept this creed. I quarrel only with the proper moment and method of achievement. In the midst of man's struggle I bow before St. Exupéry's pattern. There's a time for the inspiration of action which must, I firmly believe, precede reconstruction.

"Kingdom of the Rocks" recounts the achievements of Bernard's disciples. Young men and women of France—some in their middle twenties—retire to the rock-bound peak of Oppède, above Avignon. Here they work, cook, build, and fall in love. It's a Brook Farm bohemia, a rather Left Bank ivory tower, attracting weird souls. There is Helion, the clown, no longer funny because he knows his wife, Elaine, is a better performer. There is Douglas, an Arab, able to cook. Orlando, an Italian de-

ceiver, Plato who seeks solace with the group.

Ugliness lurches in with Plato. He has brought a valise with him containing the body of his child, dead of starvation. Natural decay demands final disposal. There is midnight evil, too, when man's lust is aroused by the beautiful Consuelo. In the autumn of the year she agrees to a trip with Bernard, in a search for the sense of play.

In Marseilles Madame de St. Exupéry is prey to a contagious skin infection. She is hospitalized; her mother-in-law comes to her and plans, on recovery, her departure for Amer-

ica to join her husband. The happy band wave her farewell. "Don't kiss me," said the clown. "You are still contagious because you are going away."

Nijinsky's star was somewhat diminished by his wife's biography. There was a certain tastelessness in Sybil Bolitho's printed grief. But there was in each case a reason for writing. "Kingdom of the Rocks" is dedicated to Antoine de Saint Exupéry, and yet he is completely exiled from its pages. One wonders why the contact was even used. The actual style, except for the telling simplicity of the flight on the train, is fancy, fey, and consciously colored. The time was definitely out of joint for this.

Canalemas

By Roberta M. Grahame

THE wind is in the wild pear tree,
And ice-cold on the bells,
But here a hundred candles shine,
Untouched and still,
Out of the winter night,
And the black windows quicken
And tremble with light.

Within the shaking of the wind
I have known a clear still morning,
Buds on the sumach, shimmering gray,
The exultation, the warning
Of breaking ice on the river;
(One to another the new flames given,
The great flames and the small,
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles,
The glory of Israel)
Snowdrops blooming by the sheltered wall.
In footprints of Candlemas day;
Light upon petals, light on snow,
In the sun of the early year—
So all the light of earth is one,
And child of the light of heaven.
And I have dreamed of the white May glow
Of the flowering pear
When the last cold is done.

But now the winter candles come
To shine upon mankind;
Shine on me, the first-born light
In darkness of the mind.
I am led out of the caves of ice,
Given fire and bread and peace,
Given a candle, gold and still,
Like the bud of a daffodil,
Given pure love like a soul in bliss,
(Make me, O Lord, thy candle,
Myself, my soul and body,
A holy and living sacrifice.)

Most beautiful upon the winter
The unlooked-for light returns;
Safe from the snow and wind forever,
The living candle burns.



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A TREASURY OF GRAND OPERA

Edited by Henry W. Simon

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