

**THE LITTLE
KING, PP. 1-75**

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The Little King, pp. 1-75 by Witter Bynner

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WITTER BYNNER

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by WITTER BYNNER



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To
*Homer and Carlota Saint-Gaudens
And Their Little Boy*

The Little King

Time: The morning of October 16, 1793.

Scene: In the Temple at Paris: a room in which is imprisoned Louis XVII, the Boy-King of France, under the tutelage of Antoine Simon and his wife, Jeanne Marie.

Behind a large iron-barred door at the back is an anteroom from which one staircase descends to the courtyard and another ascends to a platform on the roof of the Temple. A closed door leads at the left into a bedroom. Near it stands an elaborate bird-cage in which a wooden canary moves when wound up and whistles "The March of the King." In the cage are also some live canaries, one of which has a red ribbon round its neck. A small barred window at the right overlooks the courtyard. Under it are a box of mortar and some squared stones, one or two of which have al-

ready been set into the window. Nearby is a table, a cupboard of dishes and on the floor a basket of soiled linen.

At rise of the curtain, Jeanne Marie, with a dish in her hand, stands by a larger table where three people have just finished a light meal. She is a squat woman of fifty with thick features and a blotched face. While she clears the table, she talks with Barelle, apparently a middle-aged stonemason, who is mixing mortar with his trowel near the window.

JEANNE

[As she carries soiled dishes into the ante-room]

What?—Block the door and shut out all the light?

BARELLE

The window first and afterward both doors. A grating left there for his meals, but not An aperture for light or hope or mercy.

JEANNE

Ah, but the chumps have chosen you to do The job! Luck's with us, Citizen Barelle.

BARELLE

You mean God's with us. God himself,
not they,
Selected me,—to be His instrument.

JEANNE

There's damnable divinity in gold.
You be the God. I'll be the instrument.

BARELLE

*[Removing from the window a cross-shaped
iron bar]*

O Father, prove Thy greatness to these
people
That have turned coward toward a little
boy,
Son of the King they killed! O Lord, reach
down
Thy hand to us! For Jesus' sake, Thy Son,
Give me Thy strength to save the Son of
France!

JEANNE

[Seizing the iron bar]

Here's holy water for your crucifix.

[She spits on it and throws it on the floor]