

# King John's Christmas

A.A. MILNE (1927)

King John was not a good man—  
He had his little ways.  
And sometimes no one spoke to him  
For days and days and days.  
And men who came across him,  
When walking in the town,  
Gave him a supercilious stare,  
Or passed with noses in the air—  
And bad King John stood dumbly there,  
Blushing beneath his crown.

King John was not a good man,  
And no good friends had he.  
He stayed in every afternoon ...  
But no one came to tea.  
And, round about December,  
The cards upon his shelf  
Which wished him lots of Christmas cheer,  
And fortune in the coming year,  
Were never from his near and dear,  
But only from himself.

King John was not a good man,  
Yet had his hopes and fears.  
They'd given him no present now  
For years and years and years.  
But every year at Christmas,  
While minstrels stood about,  
Collecting tribute from the young  
For all the songs they might have sung,  
He stole away upstairs and hung  
A hopeful stocking out.

King John was not a good man,  
He lived his life aloof;  
Alone he thought a message out  
While climbing up the roof.  
He wrote it down and propped it  
Against the chimney stack:  
"TO ALL AND SUNDRY—NEAR AND FAR—  
F. CHRISTMAS IN PARTICULAR."  
And signed it not "Johannes R."  
But very humbly, "JACK."

“I want some crackers,  
And I want some candy;  
I think a box of chocolates  
Would come in handy;  
I don’t mind oranges,  
I do like nuts!  
And I SHOULD like a pocket-knife  
That really cuts.  
And, oh! Father Christmas, if you love me at all,  
Bring me a big, red india-rubber ball!”

King John was not a good man—  
He wrote this message out,  
And gat him to his room again,  
Descending by the spout.  
And all that night he lay there,  
A prey to hopes and fears.  
“I think that’s him a-coming now,”  
(Anxiety bedewed his brow.)  
“He’ll bring one present, anyhow—  
The first I’ve had for years.”

“Forget about the crackers,  
And forget about the candy;  
I’m sure a box of chocolates  
Would never come in handy;  
I don’t like oranges,  
I don’t want nuts,  
And I HAVE got a pocket-knife  
That almost cuts.  
But, oh! Father Christmas, if you love me at all,  
Bring me a big, red india-rubber ball!”

King John was not a good man—  
Next morning when the sun  
Rose up to tell a waiting world  
That Christmas had begun,  
And people seized their stockings,  
And opened them with glee,  
And crackers, toys and games appeared,  
And lips with sticky sweets were smeared,  
King John said grimly: “As I feared,  
Nothing again for me!”

“I did want crackers,  
And I did want candy;  
I know a box of chocolates  
Would come in handy;

I do love oranges,  
I did want nuts.  
I haven't got a pocket-knife—  
Not one that cuts.  
And, oh! if Father Christmas had loved me at all,  
He would have brought a big, red india-rubber ball!"

King John stood by the window,  
And frowned to see below  
The happy bands of boys and girls  
All playing in the snow.  
A while he stood there watching,  
And envying them all ...  
When through the window big and red  
There hurtled by his royal head,  
And bounced and fell upon the bed,  
An india-rubber ball!

AND, OH, FATHER CHRISTMAS,  
MY BLESSINGS ON YOU FALL  
FOR BRINGING HIM  
A BIG, RED,  
INDIA-RUBBER  
BALL!