

William Allingham (1824-89)

2 *King Henry's Hunt*

King Henry stood in Waltham Wood,
One morn in merry May-time;
Years fifteen hundred thirty-six,
From Christ, had roll'd away time.

King Henry stood in Waltham Wood, 5
All young green, sunny-shady.
He would not mount his pawing horse,
Though men and dogs were ready.

“What ails his Highness? Up and down
In moody sort he paceth; 10
He is not wont to be so slack,
Whatever game he chaseth.”

He paced and stopp'd; he paced and turn'd;
At times he inly mutter'd;
He pull'd his girdle, twitch'd his beard; 15
But not one word he utter'd.

The hounds in couples nosed about,
Or on the sward lay idle;
The huntsmen stole a fearful glance,
While fingering girth or bridle. 20

Among themselves, but not too loud,
The young lords laugh'd and chatter'd,
Or broke a branch of hawthorn-bloom,
As though it nothing matter'd.

King Henry sat on a fell'd oak, 25
With gloomier eyes and stranger;
His brows were knit, his lip he bit;
To look that way was danger.

Wherefore that chase began on
The signal of a gun far off,
One growl of distant cannon, —

And why so jovial grew his Grace, 65
That erst was sad and sullen.
With that boom from the Tower, had fall'n
The head of fair Anne Bullen.

Her neck, which Henry used to kiss,
The bloody axe did sever; 70
Their little child, Elizabeth,
She'll see no more for ever.

Gaily the King rides west away;
Each moment makes his glee more;
To-morrow brings his wedding-day 75
With beautiful Jane Seymour.

The sunshine falls, the wild-bird calls,
Across the slopes of Epping;
From grove to glade, through light and shade,
The troops of deer are stepping. 80

1877

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