

W. M. Thackeray (1811-63)

12 *The Willow-Tree*

Another Version

I.

Long by the willow-trees
Vainly they sought her,
Wild rang the mother's screams
O'er the grey water:
"Where is my lovely one? 5
Where is my daughter?"

II.

"Rouse thee, Sir Constable —
Rouse thee and look;
Fisherman, bring your net,
Boatman, your hook. 10
Beat in the lily-beds,
Dive in the brook!"

III.

Vainly the constable
Shouted and called her;
Vainly the fisherman 15
Beat the green alder;
Vainly he flung the net,
Never it hauled her!

IV.

Mother beside the fire
Sat, her nightcap in; 20
Father, in easy chair,
Gloomily napping,
When at the window-sill
Came a light tapping!

V.

And a pale countenance 25

Looked through the casement,
Loud beat the mother's heart,
Sick with amazement,
And at the vision which
Came to surprise her, 30
Shrieked in an agony —
“Lor! it's Elizar!”

VI.

Yes, 'twas Elizabeth —
Yes, 'twas their girl;
Pale was her cheek, and her 35
Hair out of curl.
“Mother!” the loving one,
Blushing, exclaimed,
“Let not your innocent
Lizzy be blamed. 40

VII.

“Yesterday, going to Aunt
Jones's to tea,
Mother, dear mother, I
Forgot the door-key!
And as the night was cold, 45
And the way steep,
Mrs. Jones kept me to
Breakfast and sleep.”

VIII.

Whether her Pa and Ma
Fully believed her, 50
That we shall never know,
Stern they received her;
And for the work of that
Cruel, though short, night,
Sent her to bed without 55
Tea for a fortnight.

IX.

MORAL

*Hey diddle diddlety,
Cat and the Fiddlety,
Maidens of England, take caution by she!
Let love and suicide
Never tempt you aside,
And always remember to take the door-key.*

60

1843

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