The Story of Wylie
Adapted from Rab and his Friends by Dr John Brown

This is a story about a dog,—not the kind of dog you often see in the street here; not a fat, wrrinkly pugdog, nor a smooth-skinned bulldog, nor even a big shaggy fellow, but a slim, silky-haired, sharp-eared little dog, the prettiest thing you can imagine. Her name was Wylie, and she lived in Scotland, far up on the hills, and helped her master take care of his sheep.

You can’t think how clever she was! She watched over the sheep and the little lambs like a soldier, and never let anything hurt them. She drove them out to pasture when it was time, and brought them safely home when it was time for that. When the silly sheep got frightened and ran this way and that, hurting themselves and getting lost, Wylie knew exactly what to do,—round on one side she would run, barking and scolding, driving them back; then round on the other, barking and scolding, driving them back, till they were all bunched together in front of the right gate. Then she drove them through as neatly as any person. She loved her work, and was a wonderfully fine sheepdog.

At last her master grew too old to stay alone on the hills, and so he went away to live. Before he went, he gave Wylie to two kind young men who lived in the nearest town; he knew they would be good to her. They grew very fond of her, and so did their old grandmother and the little children: she was so gentle and handsome and well behaved.

So now Wylie lived in the city where there were no sheep farms, only streets and houses, and she did not have to do any work at all,—she was just a pet dog. She seemed very happy and she was always good.

But after a while, the family noticed something odd, something very strange indeed, about their pet. Every single Tuesday night, about nine o’clock, Wylie disappeared. They would look for her, call her,—no, she was gone. And she would be gone all night. But every Wednesday morning, there she was at the door, waiting to be let in. Her silky coat was all sweaty and muddy and her feet heavy with weariness, but her bright eyes
looked up at her masters as if she were trying
to explain where she had been.

Week after week the same thing hap-
penned. Nobody could imagine where Wylie
went every Tuesday night. They tried to fol-
low her to find out, but she always slipped
away; they tried to shut her in, but she always
found a way out. It grew to be a real mystery.
Where in the world did Wylie go?

You never could guess, so I am going to
tell you.

In the city near the town where the kind
young men lived was a big market. Every
sort of thing was sold there, even live cows
and sheep and hens. On Tuesday nights,
the farmers used to come down from the
hills with their sheep to sell, and drive them
through the city streets into the pens, ready
to sell on Wednesday morning; that was the
day they sold them.

The sheep weren’t used to the city noises
and sights, and they always grew afraid and
wild, and gave the farmers and the sheepdogs
a great deal of trouble. They broke away and
ran about, in everybody’s way.

But just as the trouble was worst, about
sunrise, the farmers would see a little silky,
sharp-eared dog come trotting all alone down
the road, into the midst of them.

And then!

In and out the little dog ran like the
wind, round and about, always in the right
place, driving—coaxing—pushing—making
the sheep mind like a good school-teacher,
and never frightening them, till they were all
safely in! All the other dogs together could
not do as much as the little strange dog. She
was a perfect wonder. And no one knew
whose dog she was or where she came from.
The farmers grew to watch for her, every
week, and they called her “the wee fell yin”
which is Scots for “the little terror”; they used
to say when they saw her coming, “There’s
the wee fell yin! Now we’ll get them in.”

Every farmer would have liked to keep
her, but she let no one catch her. As soon as
her work was done she was off and away like
a fairy dog, no one knew where. Week after
week this happened, and nobody knew who
the little strange dog was.

But one day Wylie went to walk with
her two masters, and they happened to
meet some sheep farmers. The sheep farmers
stopped short and stared at Wylie, and then
they cried out, “Why, that’s the dog! That’s
the wee fell yin!” And so it was. The little
strange dog who helped with the sheep was
Wylie.

Her masters, of course, didn’t know
what the farmers meant, till they were told
all about what I have been telling you. But
when they heard about the pretty strange dog
who came to market all alone, they knew at
last where Wylie went, every Tuesday night.
And they loved her better than ever.

Wasn’t it wise of the dear little dog to
go and work for other people when her own
work was taken away? I fancy she knew that
the best people and the best dogs always
work hard at something. Any way she did
that same thing as long as she lived, and she
was always just as gentle, and silky-haired,
and loving as at first.