

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, wrinkly 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 happened. Nobody could imagine where Wylie went every Tuesday night. They tried to follow 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.