



## Mary and her Little Lamb

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Have you ever wondered who this Mary was and where she lived and why we have heard so much about her and this particular lamb? Here is the story, and a true story too, about them both.

It was over one hundred twenty years ago that Mary's little lamb was born near the city of Boston, Massachusetts. In fact, two lambs were born on a cold, blustery night in the month of March in the year 1815. Strange as it may seem, the old mother sheep would have nothing to do with one of them. She refused to mother it. It had no warm milk to drink, and the cold of that cutting March wind almost froze the baby lamb.

Little Mary Sawyer, who was then only nine years old, got up early on this particular morning and went out to the barn with her father to help take care of the stock. After the cows had been fed and the horses looked after, they went to care for the sheep. There they found the two tiny lambs which had been born that night.

Mary's tender heart was touched at the sight of the hungry, half-frozen, motherless lamb, and she begged her father to let her take it into the house and care for it. He would just be time wasted. "It is no use," he said. But Mary was determined she would do all she could for the little lamb even if it did die. She was so much in earnest that her father told her she could try her hand at nursing it in the house.

Tenderly she carried the lamb into the warm kitchen, and tried to be a mother to it. Wrapping it in a warm woolen cloth she held it in her arms near the cozy fire. She made it catnip tea, and tried to get it to drink the warm drink. She cuddled and nursed it all through the day, and was rewarded at night by seeing it drink a little of the warm tea. She was a happy girl that night, for she felt sure she had saved its life, it was going to live.

As it was growing late, I suppose her mother may have said, "Mary, it is time for you to go to bed now." Fearing the little thing might die if she left it, Mary asked if she might stay up all night and care for the lamb. So she nursed it and cared for it all through the long night. When morning came, it would drink milk, it could even stand alone! Before many days it was running around.

Mary cared for her little lamb just as girls care for their dolls. She bathed it, she combed its wool, she dressed and undressed it. She kept a bright-colored ribbon around its neck. Do you wonder now why "everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go"?

It even wanted to go to school with Mary. One morning her little brother Nat said, "Let it go to school with us today." So the lamb "followed her to school one day, which was against the rule."

It went right into the schoolroom, and Mary made it lie down under her seat. She covered it with a little blanket, and it was contented and happy as long as Mary was in her seat. But after a while Mary had

go up to class to recite. Then the lamb came scampering up to class too, so it could be close to Mary. Do you wonder that "it made the children laugh and play to see a lamb at school"? They did laugh, and the teacher laughed too.

It was so hard for the boys and girls to recite that the teacher asked Mary to take the lamb out and put it in a shed until she could take it home at noon.

There happened to be a visitor at Mary's school that day. His name was John Roulstone. When he went home that night he wrote a part of the poem we know so well about Mary and her lamb, and the next day when he saw Mary he handed her a little slip of paper. She opened it, and this is what was written on it:

"Mary had a little lamb;  
Its fleece was white as snow;  
And everywhere that Mary went,  
The lamb was sure to go.

"It followed her to school one day,  
Which was against the rule;  
It made the children laugh and play,  
To see the lamb at school.

"And so the teacher turned it out;  
But still it lingered near  
And waited patiently about  
Till Mary did appear."

Several years later three more stanzas were added to the poem:

"And then it ran to her, and laid  
Its head upon her arm,  
As if to say, 'I'm not afraid,  
You'll keep me from all harm.'

""What makes the lamb love Mary so?'  
The eager children cry;  
'Oh, Mary loves the lamb, you know,'  
The teacher did reply.

"And you each gentle animal  
In confidence may bind,  
And make them follow at your will,  
If you are only kind."

You don't wonder now that the lamb loved Mary so, do you? Animals will love us just as much if we are as kind to them as Mary was to her little lamb.

But Mary's poor little lamb had a sad ending. One Thanksgiving morning when Mary was in the barn helping her father with the feeding, the lamb ran too near one of the cows, and the cow gored the lamb with one of her horns. And in a short time Mary's little friend was dead.

Her mother took the fleece from its back and knit two pairs of nice warm stockings for Mary. She kept them for a good many years, until 1880, in fact. Then Mary was seventy-four years old. She had the stockings unraveled, and the wool cut into small pieces. This wool Mary tied to cards with her name on, and sold the pieces of wool to raise money to help repair the Old South Church in Boston.

Mary died in 1889, and is buried in the Mount Auburn cemetery in Boston. But as long as time shall last boys and girls will be told the story of the little lamb that loved its mistress because she was so kind to it. Let us learn a lesson from this story, and always be kind to animals.

