

# Mary and Her Lamb

Special to The Morning Journal.

BOSTON, December 14.—The death of Mrs. Mary Tyler in Somerville Tuesday took from the world a character more widely known to the children of English-speaking communities than any other ever known except, perhaps, Mother Goose.

She was the original Mary who had a little lamb. All the children in Somerville knew her. She was eighty-three years old and had survived her husband, Columbus Tyler, eight years. In her early life she attended school in the town of Sterling, where the episode of the historic little lamb occurred, and where the little old school-house to which the lamb took so strong a liking is still pointed out to strangers.

A hundred and more years ago there was built in Somerville a little, low-roofed house, which to-day looks as it did then, except that the trailing vines that cover a goodly part of its front and the shrubbery about it are of recent growth.



In that house, eighty-two years ago, Mary E. Sawyer (Mrs. Tyler's maiden name) was born. There was at that time no road leading to the house from either direction. There little Mary's ancestors had made a clearing where the house stood and planted an orchard. About a third of a mile, in a northerly direction, was the little district school-house, where the children from all the country round came and pursued their studies, and of them all Mary was a favorite.

About a year ago Mrs. Tyler told the correspondent of THE MORNING JOURNAL the story of the lamb and the poem which is so celebrated. She said:

"I was always very fond of animals, and from the time I could toddle out to the barn I was with the dumb beasts not a little of the time. One cold bleak March morning I went out with father, and after the cows had been fed we went to the sheep pen, and found two lambs there which had been born in the night. One of them had been forsaken by its mother, and through neglect was about dead from the cold and for want of food.

"I saw it had a little life and wanted to take it into the house, but father said no; it was about dead anyway, and at the best could live but a short time. But I couldn't bear to see the poor little thing suffer so, and I teased until I got it into the house, and then I worked upon mother's sympathies. It couldn't at first swallow, and the catnip tea I had mother make for my sick friend it could not take for a long time. I got the lamb warm the first thing, which was done by wrapping her in an old garment and holding her in my arms beside the fireplace. All day long I nursed the lamb, and at night it could swallow just a little. Oh, how pleased I was. But I wasn't then satisfied it would live, and I sat up all night with it, fearing it wouldn't be warm enough unless there was some one there to look out for its comfort.

"The day the lamb went to school my brother Nate said: 'Let's take the lamb to school with us.' I thought it would be a

good idea, and I consented, and she followed along right behind me. When the schoolhouse was reached the teacher had not arrived, and but few scholars were there. Then I began to think what I should do with the lamb while school was in session. I took her down to my seat—you know we had old-fashioned, high, boarded-up seats then. Well, I put the lamb under the seat, put on her blanket, and she lay down just as quietly as could be.

"By and by I had to go out to recite and left the lamb all right, but in a moment there was a clatter, clatter, clatter on the floor, and I knew it was the pattering of the hoofs of my lamb. Oh, how mortified I felt. The teacher was Miss Polly Kimball, who was the mother of Loring, the circulating library man of Boston. She laughed outright, and of course all the children giggled. It was rare sport for them, but I couldn't find anything mirthful in the situation. I was too embarrassed and ashamed to laugh, or even smile, at the unlooked-for appearance of my sheep out on the floor. I took the lamb out and put it in a shed until I was ready to go home at noon, when it followed me back. Usually I did not go home until night, as we carried our lunch with us, but I thought I would go at noon that day.

"Visiting the school that forenoon was a young man named John Roulstone, who was a nephew of the Rev. Lemuel Capin, who was then in Sterling. The young man was much pleased with the school incident, and the next day he rode across the fields on horseback, came to the little old school-house and handed me a slip of paper which had written upon it three verses, which are the original lines, but since then there have been two verses added by a Mrs. Townsend. The verses were written together when I got them, as follows:

"Mary had a little lamb;  
It's fleece was white as snow;  
And every where 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."

"From the fleece sheared from my ewe my mother knit two pairs of nice stockings, which for years I kept in memory of my lamb. When the ladies were raising money for the preservation of the old South Church I was asked to contribute one pair of these stockings, which I did for the benefit of the fund. The stockings were unravelled out, pieces of the yarn being attached to cards having my autograph, and these cards were sold at quite a sum apiece, realizing, I am told, about \$100.

"I have not told you about the death of my little playmate. It was Thanksgiving morning. We were all out in the barn, where the lamb had followed me. It ran right in front of the cows fastened in the stanchions, running along the feed-box. One of the creatures gave its head a toss, then lowered its horns and gored my lamb, which gave a piercing, agonizing bleat, and came toward me with the blood streaming from its side. I took it in my arms, placed its head on my lap, and there it bled to death. During its dying moments it would turn its little head, look up into my face in a most appealing manner, as though it would ask, if it could, if there was not something that I could do for it. It was a sorrowful moment for me, for my companion of many of my romps, my playfellow of many a long Summer's day, had given up



The Lamb at School.

Editor's Note: This article came from a worn scrapbook with no date, but Mrs. Tyler died in 1889. Sadly, the last lines were buried under another article. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/kpeyk2x>

From the same scrap album...

## HOUSE-CLEANING

Taking down the pictures,  
Dusting off the wall—  
"Not at home this morning  
Should there be a call!"

Toast and eggs for breakfast—  
Things turned upside-down—  
Wife and girl a-jawing—  
Husband skips for town.

Taking up the carpets—  
Tacks and dust for lunch—  
Boy, for asking questions,  
Gets from me a punch.

Washing off the windows—  
Doors all open—wide—  
She with pail and dust-pan  
Used to be my bride.

No fire in the furnace—  
Bell goes on the ring—  
"Cleaning house to-day, m'm,  
First day of the spring."

Night! a doctor calling—  
Wife done up in bed,  
Husband scoots for drugstore;  
Clerk asks who is dead.

Night reporter's item:  
"Coroner had a ring  
For a 'stiff' found floating—  
First one of the spring."

Verdict of the jury—  
Foreman, sly old mouse—  
"Suicide from torment,  
Caused by cleaning house."  
— Chicago Herald

## THE PASTOR'S APPEAL

I have sixteen pairs of slippers,  
And they're all of them too small;  
I own twenty-one watch cases,  
And they're mostly on the wall;  
I have thirty-five penwipers  
In my desk quite safely stored;  
So I modestly request you,  
When you add unto my hoard  
Of sweet Christmas gifts and wishes,  
To recall these facts are so;  
And I'd humbly like to mention  
I've *one* watch, which doesn't go.  
— "Judge"