

LADY.

BY ELIZABETH ROBBINS.

The first time Theodore saw her she was gambling in a large field near a farmhouse. "What a pretty horse!" he thought, and dismounting from his bicycle he went toward the fence. After watching him for a moment Lady trotted up, and reaching her head over confidently, let him stroke it. Theodore stood for some time talking to her and petting her, and then reluctantly mounted his bicycle and went away.

Theodore dreamed of Lady that night and thought of her at intervals all day Sunday, and on Monday, after school, he again rode out to the "Grigg farm." His father was thinking of buying a horse, and Theodore wanted to know if Lady was for sale.

Well, yes; Mr. Grigg didn't know but he would sell her, and he added that the man that got her would get a good bargain. She was sound, young, well broken to both saddle and harness, while as for disposition no horse ever had a better.

Theodore went home and said so much about Lady that finally his father was persuaded to go and look at her. Mr. Grigg harnessed her into an old wagon, and they drove her up and down the road; then, with a folded blanket in lieu of a saddle, Theodore rode her. His father was as enthusiastic in his admiration of the pretty brown horse as Theodore himself, and it ended in his decision to buy her, notwithstanding the high price put upon her by Mr. Grigg.

The money was paid one Thursday evening, Mr. Grigg coming into the house for it, and the next morning Theodore took his new saddle on his shoulder and went to fetch Lady. "You needn't be afraid of Edith's ever getting hurt by this horse, mother," he said, as he started off. "She's so gentle that anybody can do anything with her. I almost believe that Edith could drive her all alone."

His mother laughed. "I don't think we will let her try it for a while yet," she said. "Edith is hardly two years old, you know."

The saddle was heavy, but Theodore's mind was so full of Lady that he scarcely minded the weight.

She looked prettier than ever as she was led out of the barn, and Theodore was sure she recognized him. Mr. Grigg helped him to adjust the saddle, and then Theodore sprang into it and was off. Just as he was leaving the yard, however, Mr. Grigg stopped him. "Which way are you going?" he asked.

"Round by Spring street and the avenue," Theodore answered, wondering at the question.

"Oh! well, do you know, I wouldn't; I'd go the turnpike road—this time, at any rate."

"Why," Theodore asked, wondering still more at the question.

"Well, you see, Lady is a little mite shy of the electric; till she gets over it you'd better be a little mite shy of going where they be," and with this Mr. Grigg turned abruptly and went into the house.

For a full minute Theodore sat motionless, then, somewhat huskily, he spoke to Lady, and she broke into a joyous canter. To Theodore it seemed as if a cloud had settled on the landscape so bright and sunshiny a moment before. Lady was afraid of the electric! This meant that it would not be safe for his mother to drive her, excepting in one direction, and then for only a few miles, and she would not wish always to take the same drive; they could not go even to the station for his father. Very likely he himself would be forbidden to ride, save on this same railless roan. Altogether it probably meant that Lady would have to be sold. A lump came into his throat, and his hand fell and rested on Lady's satiny neck. She was not to blame for being afraid; she could not help it.

Then he forgot her one fault in the delight of going so fast and so easily, with the spring breeze blowing in his face and bringing to him the sweet smells of the woods. When he entered the village all the boys he saw stopped whatever they were doing to gaze after him as he cantered past, and he felt proud and exultant.

Just before Theodore reached home a man in a trotting gig reined up suddenly and spoke to him. "Has your father bought that mare?" he asked.

"Yes."

The man said "Humph!" and looked meditatively from boy to horse.

"Do you know anything about her?" Theodore questioned.

The man nodded. "I know she ain't a safe horse for a man to drive hereabouts, let alone boys and women."

"I've just found out that she's afraid of the electric cars," Theodore said.

"Yes; you see, she was raised and broke where there wa'n't no electric, and when she first saw one she had been sold to one of these fools that think the only way to get an idea into a horse's head is to yell and jerk and whip and kick it in, and so when she showed a bit nervous at sight of the broomstick train he treated her so it made her ten times more scared—drove her wild, in fact, and all but ruined her."

Theodore had ridden up beside the gig, and the man stretched out his hand and

patted Lady's head. "Your a little beauty," he said, "and if you'd been treated right you'd be worth every cent Grigg probably asked for you, and more."

"But, Mr. Drake—you know all about horses—don't you think there is any chance it could be helped?" Theodore spoke hurriedly and his voice trembled with eagerness.

"Well, I don't say but what she might be cured," the man answered slowly, "but it would take so much time and patience that it wouldn't hardly pay anyone to do it. No, I should advise your father to get rid of her as soon as he can, for she really ain't safe, you know," he concluded as he gathered up his reins to go.

That afternoon Theodore went to the station to meet his father and tell the bad news and plead to be allowed to try to cure Lady of her fault. "I will be patient," he said, "and I won't be careless; won't you let me just try?"

They walked some distance before his father answered.

"Yes," he said at last, "I think I can trust you, and you may try."

Lady's training began the next morning. Theodore rose very early and saddling her rode to a street which was crossed by the electric car tracks. They were at least an eighth of a mile away, but Lady began to be uneasy at the mere sound of the car, which had softened to a faint numbing, and rode her down and across the track and around the village to calm her. When the next car was due he returned to the head of the street and again waited. Lady seemed as frightened as she had been the first time, and two more trials showed no change. Theodore thought it a little discouraging, but he persisted and took her out again at noon, and yet again at night after school. At the last trial he could perceive a slight, but unmistakable improvement, and when he reported home the entire family came forth to praise Lady, and Edith, after holding out a lump of sugar on her small palm and laughing when Lady took it, was put on Lady's back and given a turn about the yard.

Day after day Theodore persevered in the training of Lady. He was always patient and gentle with her, however disappointing she might be, for he sympathized with her, and realized that her fault was not a wilful one.

By approaching a little nearer and a little nearer each day Theodore succeeded after a time in getting Lady to stand at a certain point, a few rods from the passing car, but beyond this point it seemed impossible to make her go, and he was at a loss what to do. If the car was stationary he thought she might be less afraid. Then he remembered a turnout on a branch, line, a mile from the village, where, every morning a car waited a considerable time for another car to pass. By taking a cart path through a little piece of woods he could come out opposite the turnout, and he decided to take Lady that way.

When she caught sight of the car, before emerging from the path, Lady stopped short and stayed at it, breathing hard. Theodore let her stand there for some time, patting her neck and talking to her. Then he spoke to her and she advanced several steps nearer and again stopped. Again Theodore let her stand for a while before urging her further, and these tactics were repeated several times. When the other car was heard coming Theodore turned Lady about and rode home.

In a few days Lady became so accustomed to the motionless car that she would come from the cart path into the road, and one memorial morning she distinguished herself by going close to the cars—somewhat skittishly, to be sure, with little dodging movements, and backing off now and then, but on the whole not very much afraid.

The following morning Theodore rode Lady around the car several times, and then stood off a short distance while it started, the conductor having decided to go on the next turnout and wait. Lady's eyes were wild and her breath came fast, but she stood her ground.

Lady's next lesson was to get used to the bell, and though she edged away at first she was not greatly disturbed. Then she was taught to stand quite near while the car started forward a few yards, and then, when she had recovered from that, backed to its former position, for the motorman and conductor had entered into the spirit of the thing, and were glad to do anything to help on Lady's education, while even the passengers were much interested in the pretty brown horse.

The greatest difficulty was found in training Lady to stand without flinching in the face of a swiftly approaching car, but even this was surmounted, and by the end of the summer vacation she would stand close beside the track while a car whizzed by in either direction.

And now Theodore tried Lady in the buggy. Strangely enough, in harness, Lady's fears seemed to return, perhaps because she felt less free, and for a while it looked as if Theodore's work would all have to be done over, but it took a comparatively short time under the new conditions, and one day Theodore asked his father to drive with him, and they pur-

posely encountered all the electric cars possible.

"You have done wonders," his father said, "and I see no reason now why mamma and Edith should not drive anywhere and everywhere with Lady."

But Theodore was not satisfied. "I want her to get used to the steam-roller," he said. "She is as afraid of that as can be, and now they are macadamizing the State road they will be using it nearly all the time."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind," said his mother. "They always put up a notice, and we can go some other way."

But, no, Theodore wanted her not to be afraid of anything. So he began Lady's new course of training, and every day she was taken to the State road to make the acquaintance of and become familiar with the dreadful steam roller.

The training was continued into October, and the fearful object had been met and passed on three consecutive days, when one Saturday forenoon it was discovered that Lady had a loose shoe, and as Theodore's mother wished to drive that afternoon Theodore said he would go and get Lady shod.

"I'll be a nice day, and I am so busy, don't you want to take Edith with you?" his mother suggested.

Theodore was very fond of his little sister and gladly assented, and Edith was dressed in her red cloak and hood and lifted into the buggy, where she made a pretty picture against the cream-colored lining. Then Theodore took his seat beside her, and Lady trotted off, arching her neck and stepping daintily.

Pretty soon they reached a fork in the road. They could go to the blacksmith's either way, and by taking the road to the left they could get there much more quickly. In the middle of this road, however, there was a placard: "Steam-roller at work. Dangerous passing." Theodore stopped Lady while he should decide whether to go this way.

If he were alone he would venture, but he was not alone, and Lady had never been driven in a buggy near the steam-roller, and he recalled how under the same circumstances in the case of the electric she had seemed to forget all she had learned. Still, the road was practically finished, the steam-roller now being at work on the electric tracks at one side, and if he saw there was going to be trouble he could turn around and come back.

He looked down at Edith, and at that moment she looked up in his face and smiled. It was a sweet little face framed in the red hood, and there was a dancing light in the dark eyes. "No, I won't risk it," he murmured.

Edith, growing impatient, was making the clicking noise Theodore sometimes made when he wanted Lady to go, and her imitation was so good that Lady started, at which Edith laughed gleefully. Theodore smiled also as he pulled the right rein and Lady trotted down the longer and rougher road.

When they had come to the blacksmith's and while Lady was being shod, Edith played about, or watched the flames leap up from the forge or the sparks fly from the anvil, with serious, wondering gaze.

The work was done at last, and when Lady had been harnessed into the buggy Edith was once more lifted in. Theodore, with his foot on the step, suddenly remembered that he had not paid the blacksmith, and drawing the reins in between the dasher and the whip-socket, he went back into the shop. The blacksmith was not there, and Theodore went through the shop to a platform at the rear to look for him. While he was standing there he heard the sound of wheels, and hurrying to the front again he saw Lady trotting off down the street with Edith.

He ran after them shouting. Lady did not hear, and though he ran as fast as he could the distance between them steadily increased.

A little beyond the buggy, and going in the same direction, was a man walking. Theodore called to him frantically, "Stop her! Stop her!" but he could not make the man understand till Lady had passed him and it was too late.

Then suddenly Theodore's heart almost ceased beating; Lady had been used to going home from the blacksmith's by the State road. Would she take that road this time? If she turned the next corner to the right she would be going that way. He ran as he had never run before. Nearer and nearer she came to the corner—she was there—she had turned it.

Theodore stopped running. It was too late for him to do anything now. Everything would be all over long before he could get there. Despair seized him. Oh, why had he forgotten to pay the blacksmith! Why had he been so criminally careless as to leave Edith alone in the buggy? He saw how it had been; Lady had felt his foot on the step and had thought he got in, and then Edith had "clicked" to her.

The reins would be held firmly enough; he did not worry about them, or fear that Lady would not avoid other carriages—but the steam roller! There were many turns before he would reach the State road and be in sight of it.

He was running again now, and straining his ears to hear it. Once he was sure he could distinguish the sound but after that he could hear nothing of it, listen as he might.

The engineer would naturally stop if he saw a child coming alone, but if there had

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been no accident why had the sound not begun again? Perhaps the engineer had chanced to be facing the other way and had not looked around.

When he had come to where he knew it was in sight, Theodore could not for a while bring himself to raise his eyes, for dread of what he might see. When he did gain courage to look, there, far down the road, was the steam-roller, motionless, and nobody in sight.

A terrible fear took possession of him. Perhaps Edith had been thrown out on the hard road and then carried into one of the houses, and everybody had followed while Lady had run home with the empty buggy.

Then it came to him that it must be noon and that would account for the deserted road.

Farther on he met an old man driving a fumbling horse, and stopped him to inquire, with lips so stiff he could hardly form the words, if he had seen a buggy with a little girl in it.

No, the old man had seen no buggy of any kind.

Then Lady must have run, or this man would have met her. Still, possibly not, for the old horse was very slow.

As he went on he saw other people, but he fancied they looked at him strangely, and he dared not question them.

At last, after what seemed an eternity of running, he reached home. Everything was very still. His heart was thumping like an engine now, and his legs were so weak they would hardly take him across the yard.

Some one spoke. It was his mother at her chamber window. "Did you lose something out and have to go back for it?" she asked, and then, without waiting for an answer, "I suppose you must have called to me when you came, but I didn't hear you, and it was so long before I went to take Edith from the buggy that she made me believe she came home alone. She had a wonderful story to tell, but I couldn't understand it, and I suspect it was mostly imaginary. I unharnessed Lady, and your dinner is in the oven. Edith and I have eaten ours."

"Where—is—Edith?" Theodore's voice was unsteady.

"In the back yard."

When Edith saw him she started up, dropping the spoon and dish with which she was playing, and ran, with a joyous little laugh, to meet him. "Come home—all alone," she said. "Lady go—fast!" Then she paused as if trying to think of the words to express what she wanted to tell. "Dreat big thing—go, chug-chug-chug—Lady dance!" She had broken away from him to illustrate, doing it so well that Theodore could see just how Lady, hesitating at first, had edged by, hugging the opposite sidewalk—her eyes on the steam-roller, her body curved away from it—to speed like the wind when the danger was safely passed.

He caught the child up again, his breast heaving, and held her close, till she began to struggle to get away from him and go back to her sand play.

Then Theodore went to the stable. Lady turned her pretty head to whinny as he came into the stall, and Theodore, throwing his arms about her hid his face on her neck.—Our Animal Friends.

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ESTABLISHED 1889.
The Review,
RICHIBUCTO, NEW BRUNSWICK.

Published every Thursday at \$1.00 per year in advance; \$1.50 if not paid within three months.

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