

CHAPTER I. The Coming Of Lad

The quiet village of Hampton and its surroundings are disrupted by a series of professional and amateur burglaries, igniting fears and leading to an epidemic of increased security measures among the residents. Amid this unease, the Mistress and Master of "the Place," a serene thirty-acre homestead isolated by its surrounding landscapes, feel the absence of a family dog acutely. To address their safety concerns and fill the void left by their recently deceased pointer, they compromise on getting a collie, despite differing opinions on the breed's suitability for security purposes. The collie, named Lad, arrives in a cramped crate, complete with an impressive pedigree, and is introduced to his new home with expectations that his presence will resolve the burglary issue.

Lad's appearance, a beautiful blend of mahogany-and-white, immediately captivates the family, but his arrival reignites their security concerns when he steps out, deceptively small and friendly, far from the imposing figure they anticipated. Despite this, his aristocratic bearing and the promise of his physical potential earn him a place in their hearts and home, even as he promptly adopts the Mistress as his own and develops a fastidious obedience to the household rules.

One night, a burglary attempt at the Place provides Lad with an unexpected adventure. As the thief approaches in the darkness, Lad, still innocent and friendly, sees him as a potential playmate rather than a threat. The ensuing events are narrated through the joyful and naïve perspective of Lad, who plays a daring game of chase with the bewildered thief. Excited by the interaction, Lad fails to understand the peril he is in, even as the thief eventually resorts to firing a pistol in desperation to retrieve his loot.

By pure serendipity, Lad leads the chase to a ditch that incapacitates the thief, not through an aggressive attack, but by evading him with playful innocence until the man's own momentum results in injury. The aftermath sees Lad, now somewhat more wary but still blissfully unaware of the gravity of his actions, returning to the safety and comfort of his family, satchel in mouth — unaware that he has prevented a theft and aided in capturing a criminal.

In the light of day, the Master and Mistress reflect on the night's inexplicable events, with the Master skeptical of Lad's understanding and intentions, and the Mistress praising the dog's supposed resourcefulness and bravery. Despite the differing interpretations of the incident, it is clear that Lad has not only endeared himself further to his family but has also unwittingly established himself as a competent guardian of the Place. As the community ponders over the curious circumstances that led to the burglar's capture, Lad relishes in his newfound role, albeit with the same innocent enthusiasm that marked his unintended heroics.