

**SAM IN
THE SUBURBS**

**BY
P. G. WODEHOUSE**

Table of Contents

SAM IN THE SUBURBS

CHAPTER ONE SAM STARTS ON A JOURNEY

CHAPTER TWO KAY OF VALLEY FIELDS

CHAPTER THREE SAILORS DON'T CARE

CHAPTER FOUR SCENE OUTSIDE FASHIONABLE NIGHT-CLUB

CHAPTER FIVE PAINFUL AFFAIR AT A COFFEE-STALL

CHAPTER SIX A FRIEND IN NEED

CHAPTER SEVEN SAM AT SAN RAFAEL

CHAPTER EIGHT SAM AT MON REPOS

CHAPTER NINE BREAKFAST FOR ONE

CHAPTER TEN SAM FINDS A PHOTOGRAPH

CHAPTER ELEVEN SAM BECOMES A HOUSEHOLDER

CHAPTER TWELVE SAM IS MUCH TOO SUDDEN

CHAPTER THIRTEEN INTRODUCING A SYNDICATE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN THE CHIRRUP

CHAPTER FIFTEEN VISITORS AT MON REPOS

CHAPTER SIXTEEN ASTONISHING STATEMENT OF HASH TODHUNTER

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN ACTIVITIES OF THE DOG AMY

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN DISCUSSION AT A LUNCHEON TABLE

CHAPTER NINETEEN LORD TILBURY ENGAGES AN ALLY

CHAPTER TWENTY TROUBLE IN THE SYNDICATE

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE AUNT YSOBEL POINTS THE WAY

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO STORMY TIMES AT MON REPOS

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE SOAPY MOLLOY'S BUSY AFTERNOON

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR MAINLY ABOUT TROUSERS

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE SAM HEARS BAD NEWS

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX SAM HEARS GOOD NEWS

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN SPIRITED BEHAVIOUR OF MR. BRADDOCK

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT THE MISSING MILLIONS

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE MR. CORNELIUS READS HIS HISTORY

SAM IN THE SUBURBS

CHAPTER ONE

SAM STARTS ON A JOURNEY

ALL day long, New York, stewing in the rays of a late August sun, had been growing warmer and warmer; until now, at three o'clock in the afternoon, its inhabitants, with the exception of a little group gathered together on the tenth floor of the Wilmot Building on Upper Broadway, had divided themselves by a sort of natural cleavage into two main bodies—the one crawling about and asking those they met if this was hot enough for them, the other maintaining that what they minded was not so much the heat as the humidity.

The reason for the activity prevailing on the tenth floor of the Wilmot was that a sporting event of the first magnitude was being pulled off there—Spike Murphy, of the John B. Pynsent Import and Export Company, being in the act of contesting the final of the Office Boys' High-Kicking Championship against a willowy youth from the Consolidated Eyebrow Tweezer and Nail File Corporation. The affair was taking place on the premises of a few stenographers, chewing gum; some male wage slaves in shirt sleeves; and Mr. John B. Pynsent's nephew, Samuel Shotter, a young man of agreeable features, who was acting as referee.

In addition to being referee, Sam Shotter was also the patron and promoter of the tourney; the man but for whose vision and enterprise a wealth of young talent would have lain undeveloped, thereby jeopardising America's chances should an event of this kind ever be added to the program of the Olympic Games. It was

he who, wandering about the office in a restless search for methods of sweetening an uncongenial round of toil, had come upon Master Murphy practicing kicks against the wall of a remote corridor and had encouraged him to kick higher. It was he who had arranged matches with representatives of other firms throughout the building. And it was he who out of his own pocket had provided the purse which, as the lad's foot crashed against the plaster a full inch above his rival's best effort, he now handed to Spike together with a few well-chosen words.

“Murphy,” said Sam, “is the winner. After a contest conducted throughout in accordance with the best traditions of American high kicking, he has upheld the honour of the John B. Pynsent Ex and Imp and retained his title. In the absence of the boss, therefore, who has unfortunately been called away to Philadelphia and so is unable to preside at this meeting, I take much pleasure in presenting him with the guerdon of victory, this handsome dollar bill. Take it, Spike, and in after years, when you are a grey-haired alderman or something, look back to this moment and say to yourself——”

Sam stopped, a little hurt. He thought he had been speaking rather well, yet already his audience was walking out on him. Spike Murphy, indeed, was running.

“Say to yourself——”

“When you are at leisure, Samuel,” observed a voice behind him, “I should be glad of a word with you in my office.”

Sam turned.

“Oh, hullo, uncle,” he said.

He coughed; Mr. Pynsent coughed.

“I thought you had gone to Philadelphia,” said Sam.

“Indeed?” said Mr. Pynsent.

He made no further remark, but proceeded sedately to his room, from which he emerged again a moment later with a patient look of inquiry on his face.

“Come here, Sam,” he said. “Who,” he asked, pointing, “is this?”

Sam peeped through the doorway and perceived, tilted back in a swivel chair, a long, lean man of repellent aspect. His large feet rested comfortably on the desk, his head hung sideways and his mouth was open. From his mouth, which was of generous proportions, there came a gurgling snore.

“Who,” repeated Mr. Pynsent, “is this gentleman?”

Sam could not help admiring his uncle’s unerring instinct—that amazing intuition which had led him straight to the realisation that if an uninvited stranger was slumbering in his pet chair, the responsibility must of necessity be his nephew Samuel’s.

“Good Lord!” he exclaimed. “I didn’t know he was there.”

“A friend of yours?”

“It’s Hash.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Hash Todhunter, you know, the cook of the *Araminta*. You remember I took a trip a year ago on a tramp steamer? This fellow

was the cook. I met him on Broadway this afternoon and gave him lunch. I brought him back here because he wanted to see the place where I work.”

“Work?” said Mr. Pynsent, puzzled.

“I had no notion he had strayed into your room.”

Sam spoke apologetically, but he would have liked to point out that the blame for all these embarrassing occurrences was really Mr. Pynsent’s. If a man creates the impression that he is going to Philadelphia and then does not go, he has only himself to thank for any complications that may ensue. However, this was a technicality with which he did not bother his uncle.

“Shall I wake him?”

“If you would be so good. And having done so, take him away and store him somewhere and then come back. I have much to say to you.”

Shaken by a vigorous hand, the sleeper opened his eyes. Hauled to his feet, he permitted himself to be led, still in a trancelike condition, out of the room and down the passage to the cubbyhole where Sam performed his daily duties. Here, sinking into a chair, he fell asleep again; and Sam left him and went back to his uncle. Mr. Pynsent was staring thoughtfully out of the window as he entered.

“Sit down, Sam,” he said.

Sam sat down.

“I’m sorry about all that, uncle.”

“All what?”

“All that business that was going on when you came in.”

“Ah, yes. What was it, by the way?”

“Spike Murphy was seeing if he could kick higher than a kid from a firm downstairs.”

“And did he?”

“Yes.”

“Good boy,” said Mr. Pynsent approvingly. “You arranged the competition, no doubt?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I did.”

“You would. You have been in my employment,” proceeded Mr. Pynsent evenly, “three months. In that time you have succeeded in thoroughly demoralising the finest office force in New York.”

“Oh, uncle!” said Sam reproachfully.

“Thoroughly,” repeated Mr. Pynsent. “The office boys call you by your Christian name.”

“They will do it,” sighed Sam. “I clump their heads, but the habit persists.”

“Last Wednesday I observed you kissing my stenographer.”

“The poor little thing had toothache.”

“Also, Mr. Ellaby informs me that your work is a disgrace to the firm.” There was a pause. “The English public school is the curse of the age,” said Mr. Pynsent dreamily.

To a stranger the remark might have sounded irrelevant, but Sam understood the import. He appreciated it for what it was—a nasty crack.

“Did they teach you anything at Wrykyn, Sam, except football?”

“Oh, yes.”

“What?”

“Oh, lots of things.”

“I have seen no evidence of it. Why your mother sent you to that place, instead of to some good business college, I cannot imagine.”

“Well, you see, father had been there——”

Sam broke off. Mr. Pynsent, he was aware, had not been fond of the late Anthony Shotter—considering, and possibly correctly, that his dead sister had, in marrying that amiable but erratic person, been guilty of the crowning folly of a frivolous and fluffy-headed life.

“A strong recommendation,” said Mr. Pynsent dryly.

Sam had nothing to say to this.

“You are very like your father in a great many ways,” said Mr. Pynsent.

Sam let this one go by too. They were coming off the bat a bit fast this morning, but there was nothing to be done about it.

“And yet I am fond of you, Sam,” resumed Mr. Pynsent after a brief pause.

This was more the stuff.

“And I am fond of you, uncle,” said Sam in a hearty voice. “When I think of all you have done for me——”

“But,” went on Mr. Pynsent, “I feel that I shall like you even better three thousand miles away from the offices of the Pynsent Export and Import Company. We are parting, Sam—and immediately.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I, on the other hand,” said Mr. Pynsent, “am glad.”

There was a silence. Sam, feeling that the interview, having reached this point, might be considered over, got up.

“Wait a moment,” said Mr. Pynsent. “I want to tell you what plans I have made for your future.”

Sam was agreeably surprised. He had not supposed that his future would be of interest to Mr. Pynsent.

“Have you made plans?”

“Yes; everything is settled.”

“This is fine, uncle,” said Sam cordially. “I thought you were going to drive me out into the snow.”

“Do you remember meeting an Englishman named Lord Tilbury at dinner at my house?”

Sam did indeed. His Lordship had got him wedged into a corner after the meal and had talked without a pause for more than half an hour.

“He is the proprietor of the Mammoth Publishing Company, a concern which produces a great many daily and weekly papers in London.”

Sam was aware of this. Lord Tilbury’s conversation had been almost entirely autobiographical.

“Well, he is returning to England on Saturday on the *Mauretania*, and you are going with him.”

“Eh?”

“He has offered to employ you in his business.”

“But I don’t know anything about newspaper work.”

“You don’t know anything about anything,” Mr. Pynsent pointed out gently. “It is the effect of your English public-school education. However, you certainly cannot be a greater failure with Lord Tilbury than you have been with me. That wastepaper basket over there has been in my office only four days, and already it knows more about the export and import business than you would learn if you stayed here fifty years.”

Sam made plaintive noises. Fifty years, he considered, was an overstatement.

“I concealed nothing of this from Lord Tilbury, but nevertheless he insists on engaging you.”

“Odd,” said Sam. He could not help feeling a little flattered at this intense desire for his services on the part of a man who had met him only once. Lord Tilbury might be a bore, but there was no getting away from the fact that he had that gift without which no one can amass a large fortune—that strange, almost uncanny gift for spotting the good man when he saw him.

“Not at all odd,” said Mr. Pynsent. “He and I are in the middle of a business deal. He is trying to persuade me to do something which at present I have not made up my mind to do. He thinks that by taking you off my hands he will put me under an obligation. So he will.”

“Uncle,” said Sam impressively, “I will make good.”

“You’d better,” returned Mr. Pynsent, unmelted. “It is your last chance. There is no earthly reason why I should go on supporting you for the rest of your life, and I do not intend to do it. If you make a mess of things at Tilbury House, don’t think that you can come running back to me. There will be no fatted calf. Remember that.”

“I will, uncle, I will. But don’t worry. Something tells me I am going to be good. I shall like going to England.”

“I am glad to hear that. Well, that is all. Good afternoon.”

“You know, it’s rather strange that you should be sending me over there,” said Sam meditatively.

“I don’t think so. I am glad to have the chance.”

“What I mean is—do you believe in palmists?”

“I do not. Good-bye.”

“Because a palmist told me——”

“The door,” said Mr. Pynsent, “is one of those which close automatically when the handle is released.”

Having tested this statement and proved it correct, Sam went back to his own quarters, where he found Mr. Clarence (Hash) Todhunter, the popular and energetic chef of the tramp steamer *Araminta*, awake and smoking a short pipe.

“Who was the old boy?” inquired Mr. Todhunter.

“That was my uncle, the head of the firm.”

“Did I go to sleep in his room?”

“You did.”

“I’m sorry about that, Sam,” said Hash, with manly regret. “I had a late night last night.”

He yawned spaciously. Hash Todhunter was a lean, stringy man in the early thirties, with a high forehead and a ruminative eye. Irritated messmates who had played poker with him had sometimes compared this eye to that of a perishing fish; but to the critic whose judgment was not biased and inflamed by recent pecuniary losses it would have been more suggestive of a parrot which has looked on life and found it full of disillusionment. There was a strong pessimistic streak in Hash, and in his cups he was accustomed to hint darkly that if everyone had their rights he would have been in the direct line of succession to an earldom. It was a long and

involved story, casting great discredit on all the parties concerned; but as he never told it twice in the same way, little credence was accorded to it by a discriminating fo'c'sle. For the rest, he cooked the best dry hash on the Western Ocean, but was not proud.

“Hash,” said Sam, “I’m going over to England.”

“Me too. We sail Monday.”

“Do you, by Jove!” said Sam thoughtfully. “I’m supposed to be going on the *Mauretania* on Saturday, but I’ve half a mind to come with you instead. I don’t like the idea of six days *tête-à-tête* with Lord Tilbury.”

“Who’s he?”

“The proprietor of the Mammoth Publishing Company, where I am going to work.”

“Have you got the push here then?”

It piqued Sam a little that this untutored man should so readily have divined the facts. He also considered that Hash had failed in tact. He might at least have pretended that he supposed it to be a case of handing in a resignation.

“Yes, you might perhaps put it that way.”

“Not because of me sittin’ in his chair?”

“No. There are, apparently, a number of reasons. Hash, it’s a curious thing, my uncle taking it into his head to shoot me over to England like this. The other day a palmist told me that I was shortly going to take a long journey, at the end of which I should meet a fair girl.... Hash!”

“Ur?”

“I want to show you something.”

He fumbled in his pocket and produced a note-case. Having done this, he paused. Then, seeming to overcome a momentary hesitation, he opened the case and from it, with the delicacy of an Indian priest at a shrine handling a precious relic, extracted a folded piece of paper.

A casual observer, deceived by a certain cheery irresponsibility that marked his behaviour, might have set Sam Shoter down as one of those essentially material young men in whose armour romance does not easily find a chink. He would have erred in this assumption. For all that he weighed a hundred and seventy pounds of bone and sinew and had when amused—which was often—a laugh like that of the hyena in its native jungle, there was sentiment in Sam. Otherwise this paper would scarcely have been in his possession.

“But before showing it to you,” he said, eying Hash intently, “I would like to ask you a question. Do you see anything funny, anything laughable, anything at all ludicrous, in a fellow going for a fishing trip to Canada and being stuck in a hut miles from anywhere with nothing to read and nothing to listen to except the wild duck calling to its mate and the nifties of a French-Canadian guide who couldn’t speak more than three words of English——”

“No,” said Hash.

“I haven’t finished. Do you—to proceed—see anything absurd in the fact that such a fellow, in such a situation, finding the photograph of a beautiful girl tacked up on the wall of the hut by

some previous visitor and having nothing else to look at for five weeks, should have fallen in love with this photograph? Think before you answer.”

“No,” said Hash, after consideration. He was not a man who readily detected the humorous aspect of anything.

“That’s good,” said Sam. “And lucky for you. Because had you let one snicker out of yourself—just one—I would have smitten you rather forcibly on the beazer. Well, I did.”

“Did what?”

“Found this picture tacked up on the wall and fell in love with it. Look!”

He unfolded the paper reverently. It now revealed itself as a portion of a page torn from one of those illustrated journals which brighten the middle of the Englishman’s week. Its sojourn on the wall of the fishing hut had not improved it. It was faded and yellow, and over one corner a dark stain had spread itself, seeming to indicate that some occupant of the hut had at one time or another done a piece of careless carving. Nevertheless, he gazed at it as a young knight might have gazed upon the Holy Grail.

“Well?”

Hash surveyed the paper closely.

“That’s mutton gravy,” he said, pointing at the stain and forming a professional man’s swift diagnosis. “Beef wouldn’t be so dark.”

Sam regarded him with a glance of concentrated loathing which would have embarrassed a more sensitive man.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

