

He led the way to the stable-yard accordingly, the Rat following with a most mistrustful expression; and there, drawn out of the coach-house into the open, they saw a gipsy caravan, shining with newness, painted a canary-yellow picked out with green, and red wheels.

‘There you are!’ cried the Toad, straddling and expanding himself. ‘There’s real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here to-day, up and off to somewhere else to-morrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that’s

always changing! And mind, this is the very finest cart of its sort that was ever built, without any exception. Come inside and look at the arrangements. Planned 'em all myself, I did!

The Mole was tremendously interested and excited, and followed him eagerly up the steps and into the interior of the caravan. The Rat only snorted and thrust his hands deep into his pockets, remaining where he was.

It was indeed very compact and comfortable. Little sleeping-bunks – a little table that folded up against the wall – a cooking-stove, lockers, bookshelves, a bird cage with a bird in it; and pots, pans, jugs and kettles of every size and variety.

'All complete!' said the Toad triumphantly, pulling open a locker. 'You see – biscuits, potted lobster, sardines – everything you can possibly want. Soda-water here – baccy there – letter-paper, bacon, jam, cards and dominoes – you'll find,' he continued, as they descended the steps again, 'you'll find that nothing whatever has been forgotten, when we make our start this afternoon.'

‘I beg your pardon,’ said the Rat slowly, as he chewed a straw, ‘but did I overhear you say something about “we”, and “start”, and “*this afternoon*”?’

‘Now, you dear good old Ratty,’ said Toad imploringly, ‘don’t begin talking in that stiff and sniffy sort of way, because you know you’ve *got* to come. I can’t possibly manage without you, so please consider it settled, and don’t argue – it’s the one thing I can’t stand. You surely don’t mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in a bank, and *boat*? I want to show you the world! I’m going to make an *animal* of you, my boy!’

‘I don’t care,’ said the Rat doggedly. ‘I’m not coming, and that’s flat. And I *am* going to stick to my old river, *and* live in a hole, *and* boat, as I’ve always done. And what’s more, Mole’s going to stick to me and do as I do, aren’t you, Mole?’

‘Of course I am,’ said the Mole loyally. ‘I’ll always stick to you, Rat, and what you say is to be – has got to be. All the same, it sounds as if it might have been – well, rather fun, you know!’ he added wistfully. Poor Mole! The Life Adventurous was so new a thing to

him and so thrilling; and this fresh aspect of it was so tempting; and he had fallen in love at first sight with the canary-coloured cart and all its little fitments.

The Rat saw what was passing in his mind, and wavered. He hated disappointing people, and he was fond of the Mole, and would do almost anything to oblige him. Toad was watching both of them closely.

‘Come along in and have some lunch,’ he said diplomatically, ‘and we’ll talk it over. We needn’t decide anything in a hurry. Of course, *I* don’t really care. I only want to give pleasure to you fellows. ‘Live for others!’ That’s my motto in life.’

During luncheon – which was excellent, of course, as everything at Toad Hall always was – the Toad simply let himself go. Disregarding the Rat, he proceeded to play upon the inexperienced Mole as on a harp. Naturally a voluble animal, and always mastered by his imagination, he painted the prospects of the trip and the joys of the open life and the road-side in such glowing colours that the Mole could hardly sit in his chair for excitement. Somehow, it soon seemed taken for granted by all three of them that the trip

was a settled thing; and the Rat, though still unconvinced in his mind, allowed his good-nature to over-ride his personal objections. He could not bear to disappoint his two friends, who were already deep in schemes and anticipations, planning out each day's separate occupation for several weeks ahead.