

**Charles George Douglas  
Roberts**



*Reube Dare's Shad  
Boat: A Tale  
of the Tide  
Country*

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# **Reube Dare's Shad Boat: A Tale of the Tide Country**



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# **CHAPTER I.**

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# The “Dido” Goes Adrift.

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THE road from Frosty Hollow to Westcock, after climbing the hill by the red creek and passing Mrs. Carter’s yellow cottage, ran through a piece of dark and ancient fir woods. With the sighing of the firs there mixed a deeper sound, the voice of the wild tides of the changing Tantramar, unseen and far below. Turning sharply to the right, the road presently emerged from the woods and came upon a very different picture from that which it had left behind. It traversed the face of a long, wide, steep slope of upland, set here and there with a gray or white cottage, here and there a little grove. From the upland foot a mile-wide belt of marsh stretched to the waters of the open bay. The pale-green marsh was divided sharply from the yellow and flashing waves by the long lines of the dike, to which it owed its existence as good dry land. At intervals could be seen small creeks winding through the grassy level. Every creek mouth formed a little haven, clustered about with net reels, and crowded with the boats of the shad fishers.

Out from the whispering wood and into the fresh June sunlight of the open came two tallish youths, walking slowly and talking with the joyous zest of old friends who had been long parted. The older-looking of the two was Will Carter, just home from college for the summer vacation. Two years of college life had changed him little. He was the same slim, thoughtful, discreet, yet blithely dauntless lad who had lifted the mortgage from his mother’s farm and punished the ruffian Baizley, and softened the hard old heart of Mr. Hand.

[A] College study had increased the somewhat scholarly pallor of his face, but college athletics had added poise and grace to the movements of his well-knit muscles. He had hastened home to his mother immediately on the close of the college, leaving his brother Ted to take a month's canoe trip through the inland waters.

Will's present companion, Reuben Dare, was a chum only second to Ted in his love. Reube Dare was just eighteen. He was about the same height as Will, but of a much heavier build. His was also a heavier and slower nature, but one of faithful loyalty and courage combined with strong common sense. His hair was light like Will's, but his face was round and ruddy. At a hasty glance one might fancy that he was good-natured to the verge of being "soft," but there was a steady, controlling gleam in his light gray eyes which made folk very slow to presume on his good nature. In fact, his eyes gave one the peculiar impression of having reached full manhood before the rest of his face. He swung his long arms loosely as he walked, and occasionally he stumbled in the ruts, being too much absorbed in watching his comrade's words to note just where he was stepping.

It had long been Reube Dare's keenest ambition to put himself through college, but the poverty of his widowed mother—the population of that land of sailors and fishermen is largely made up of widows—had stood sternly in the way. The success of the Carter boys, however, in reclaiming that rich marsh by the creek had proved a strong stimulus, and given him new hopes, with results which this story will show.

All at once Will Carter, who had been talking eagerly for the last half hour, stopped short, wiped his forehead, and

perched himself on the rail fence under a shady roadside maple. Reube leaned against the fence, and took off his round straw hat.

“Now, Reube,” said Will, “it’s your turn. I’ve talked myself dry, and gabbled right along like the ‘crick’ at low water. Your letters, you old oyster, have told me mighty little. What have you been up to all winter?”

“Building my shad boat,” answered Reube.

“Mother told me something about it. It’s great, old man!” said Will. “But you don’t mean to say you built her all yourself.”

“Well, pretty near,” replied his friend. “Old Chris Boltenhouse helped me with the frame, and set me right whenever I got in a muddle. It was hard work, but I tell you, Will, it was so interesting I could hardly take time to eat. I’ve thought of nothing else for months, except when I was worrying over mother’s eyes, and now—”

“I heard about your mother’s trouble with her eyes,” interrupted Will, sympathetically. “I do hope it’s not going to be serious.”

“Worries me a lot,” said Reube, gloomily. And then, his face brightening again, he went on, “But now I’ve got her done, and rigged and tarred and afloat at Wood Creek landing.”

“Reube,” interrupted Will again, and this time in a tone of severe surprise, “what a singular way to treat your mother! I cannot imagine that dignified lady in any such absurd situation as you speak of.”

“Come off!” retorted Reuben, very literally, as he caught at Will’s ankle and, with a quick twist, jerked him from his

perch. "I'm not talking of mother, but of the *Dido*, and I say there's not a trimmer craft will go shad fishing from Westcock this season. I tell you, Will, I've just put my heart into that boat. If it were not for that grove of Barnes's we could see her now, lying with the others, in the mouth of the creek; and even at this distance you could pick her out from the rest."

"Well," said Will, "let's get along and inspect her as soon as possible. I'm as tickled about her as if I'd built her myself; and I'm going to help you with the fishing all I can, as my holiday diversion. Did she cost you much? Is she going to *pay*, like *new marsh*?"

"If she has a lucky summer," answered Reube—"and they do say there's going to be a great run of shad this season—I'll have her all paid for and quite a lump of money in the bank this fall."

"And then!" said Will, in a voice of joyous anticipation. "What then? College with us, for the winter term, anyway! And maybe a scholarship that will still further simplify matters!"

"No!" exclaimed Reube, shaking his head gravely. "No college for me till I have had mother away to Boston or New York, to get her eyes properly seen to."

Will's face fell a little. "That's so, old man. The eyes must be fixed up first of all, of course. But if the boat's a success, another season will straighten it all out, eh? And when you come to college you'll be a freshman, while I'm a senior! Won't I haze you though?"

"Come and practice a bit now!" said Reube, grimly.

Will ignored this invitation.



“What did you say you called the boat?” he queried.

“The *Dido*,” answered Reube.

“Imagine the stately queen of Carthage going out shad fishing!” chuckled Will. “What struck you to choose that for a name?”

“O,” said Reube, gravely, “it will serve to keep my aspirations before my mind’s eye, even when I am occupied in the prosaic task of splitting shad.”

At this moment a long, shambling figure was seen climbing a fence some distance down the hill, to the left of our pedestrians. Long, lank black hair fell on his shoulders from beneath a black and greasy slouch hat. Immediately the fellow disappeared in a choke-cherry thicket, after turning a furtive, swarthy face for one moment toward the road.

“How’s your hereditary enemy behaving himself these days, Reube?” inquired Will.

“Well,” said Reube, “Mart Gandy’s Mart Gandy, same as he always was. But it seems to me that of late he has been troubling his neighbors less and himself more than he used to. They say he’s seldom quite sober. He’s left us alone pretty much all winter, though he did shoot one of my best sheep in the upper pasture along in the first of the spring.”

“But didn’t you punish him for it?” asked Will, indignantly, glaring back at the cherry trees wherein Gandy had vanished.

“I didn’t actually catch him, or I would have,” said Reube. “And I didn’t want to have him taken up, for, bad lot as he is, he does look after his mother and sisters in a kind of a way, and he is all they have to depend on; for his drunken old

father has become a regular idiot, doing nothing but sit in the sun, pick at his beard, and whimper for a drink.”

By this time they had reached the top of a knoll, whence the whole shore line was visible.

“There’s the *Dido!*” exclaimed Reube, proudly, turning with a sweep of the hand toward the mouth of Wood Creek. But the words ended in a cry of anger and anxiety. “She’s adrift!” he shouted. “Come on! Come on! We must catch her before she gets out of the creek. The wind’s right down the bay!”

As he spoke he vaulted over the fence and started on a run across the fields. Will was at his side in an instant.

“How can it have happened?” he asked.

“Gandy’s work, I’ll be bound!” muttered Reube, between his teeth; and his eyes grew pale and bright like steel.

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[A] Professor Roberts has already told the spirited story of “How the Carter Boys Lifted the Mortgage,” in a volume, *The Raid from Beauséjour*, which is published by Hunt & Eaton, New York.