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THE MAID OF SKER—PART I.

CHAPTER I.—FISHERMAN DAVY A FISH OUT OF WATER.

I AM but an ancient fisherman upon the coast of Glamorganshire, with work enough of my own to do, and trouble enough of my own to heed, in getting my poor living. Yet no peace there is for me among my friends and neighbors, unless I will set to and try—as they bid me twice a-day, perhaps—whether I cannot tell the rights of a curious adventure which it pleased Providence should happen, off and on, amidst us, now for a good many years, and with many ins and outs to it. They assure me, also, that all good people who can read and write, for ten, or it may be twenty, miles around the place I live in, will buy my book—if I can make it—at a higher price, perhaps, per lb., than they would give me for sewin, which are the very best fish I catch: and hence provision may be found for the old age and infirmities, now gaining upon me, every time I try to go out fishing.

In this encouragement and prospect I have little faith, knowing how much more people care about what they eat than what they read. Nevertheless I will hope for

the best, especially as my evenings now are very long and wearisome; and I was counted a hopeful scholar, fifty years agone perhaps, in our village school here—not to mention the Royal Navy; and most of all, because a very wealthy gentleman, whose name will appear in this story, has promised to pay all expenses, and £50 down (if I do it well), and to leave me the profit, if any.

Notwithstanding this, the work of writing must be very dull to me, after all the change of scene, and the open air and sea, and the many sprees ashore, and the noble fights with Frenchmen, and the power of oaths that made me jump so in his Majesty's navy. God save the King, and Queen, and members of the Royal Family, be they as many as they will—and they seem, in faith, to be manifold. But His power is equal to it all, if they will but try to meet Him.

However, not to enter upon any view of politics—all of which are far beyond the cleverest hand at a bait among us—I am inditing of a thing very plain and