

# THE PRINCE OF INDIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE NAMELESS BAY

IN the noon of a September day in the year of our dear Lord 1395, a merchant vessel nodded sleepily upon the gentle swells of warm water flowing in upon the Syrian coast. A modern seafarer, looking from the deck of one of the *Messagerie* steamers now plying the same line of trade, would regard her curiously, thankful to the calm which held her while he slaked his wonder, yet more thankful that he was not of her passage.

She could not have exceeded a hundred tons burthen. At the bow and stern she was decked, and those quarters were fairly raised. Amidship she was low and open, and pierced for twenty oars, ten to a side, all swaying listlessly from the narrow ports in which they were hung. Sometimes they knocked against each other. One sail, square and of a dingy white, drooped from a broad yard-arm, which was itself tilted, and now and then creaked against the yellow mast complainingly, unmindful of the simple tackle designed to keep it in control. A watchman crouched in the meagre shade of a fan-like structure overhanging the bow deck. The roofing and the floor, where exposed, were clean, even bright; in all