

MARGUERITE DE ROBERVAL

CHAPTER I

“THESE narrow, cramped streets torture me! I must get out of this place or I shall go mad. The country, with its rolling fields and great stretches of calm sky helps a little, but nothing except the ocean will satisfy my spirit. Five years have gone now, and I am still penned up in this miserable hole, with no power to go abroad, save for a cruise up the Channel, or a run south along the coast. If matters do not change, I think I shall quietly weigh anchor on La Hermine and slip across the Atlantic without leave of King or blessing of priest. I tell you, Claude, it would be rare sport to go that way, without a good-bye word to friend or lover. Gold is there in plenty, and diamonds are there, and a road to the Indies; and if we should bring back riches and new discoveries the King would forgive our boldness.”

The speaker was a middle-aged man, with jet-black hair and beard, and piercing black eyes. He was as straight as a mid-forest pine, and tanned and wrinkled with years of exposure to sun and