THE JEWELLED LIZARD

BY

W. DINGWALL FORDYCE

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO, AND PARIS
CONTENTS.

I. The Finding of the Lizard, .... 5
II. An Unwelcome Visitor, .... 26
III. Arrival at Bekoeda, .... 40
IV. The Lizard Keeps its Secret, .... 57
V. The Story of the Sultan’s Jewels, .... 76
VI. Penang v. Sumatra, .... 96
VII. The Sultan’s Discovery, .... 117
VIII. A Clue to the Mystery, .... 137
IX. The Lizard Tells, .... 157
X. The Finding of the Treasure, .... 177
XI. Twice Foiled, .... 203
XII. The End of Mah Peng, .... 223
XIII. Safe at Last, .... 246
CHAPTER I.

THE FINDING OF THE LIZARD.

"THERE! I'll give you one dollar to divide amongst yourselves;" and Stanley Linward flung the coin into the sampan, and swung himself up the ladder and on to the deck of the Avagee.

"You're very free with your cash, young fellow," said a short, red-haired man who was leaning over the side, clad in a dirty white drill suit; "twenty cents would have paid the lot, and well too!"

"I didn't know how much they should get," confessed Stanley, "and I was only too glad to get rid of them. Look! even now they are coming after me." He pointed, as he spoke, to the ladder, up which two of the black Kling boatmen were clambering, naked but for a loin cloth.

"I'll settle the impudent beggars," said the red-
hairy man, opening on the offending natives with a volley of Malay which seemed to stagger them.

The couple on the ladder halted, and finally retreated to their sampan, which put off for the shore, followed by the shouts and jeers of all the surrounding natives.

"Thank you awfully," exclaimed Stanley, much relieved; "these men have pestered me ever since I landed from the China, and seemed to look upon me and my luggage as their lawful prey. I hope you are to be a fellow-passenger to Belawen, Mr.—"

"Richards—Robert Richards," said the red-haired man, with an important air, "chief engineer of the Avangre. You may have heard of my name?"

"No-o," admitted the boy reluctantly, blushing at his mistake, and wishing he could have said "yes." "My name is Stanley Linward."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Linward," said the engineer, shaking hands formally. "Yes, sir, I am Richards of Birmingham, champion swimmer, boxer—" Here a swarthy Javanese, clothed in greasy rags, approached and addressed the champion in Malay. "Excuse me," said Mr. Richards, turning to Stanley; "I am wanted in the engine-room, but we shall meet again at dinner."

He went forward with his assistant, and Stanley found his way below; and coming across a Chinese steward who spoke broken English, was shown into his stuffy little cabin, in which his luggage had
THE FINDING OF THE LIZARD.

already been safely stowed. After a wash and change he returned to the deck, and leaning over the side, watched the animated scene with interest.

Only sixteen years old, Stanley stood five feet ten inches in height; and, indeed, it was the remarkable rapidity of his growth that was responsible for his presence in the East. The old family doctor had looked grave when the boy had developed a nasty cough, and had told Mrs. Linward plainly that a long sea voyage was absolutely essential for her son's health. With her husband's illness and recent death vividly in her mind, Mrs. Linward had written a long letter to her brother Ralph, explaining the circumstances and her inability to raise funds for such an expensive cure. Her brother, manager of a large tobacco estate in Sumatra, had cabled to send the boy out to him, at the same time undertaking all expenses. The parting had been a sorrowful one, but Stanley realized that his own future and the comfort of his mother and little sister Agnes depended on his health, and so did his best to keep a brave face and stout heart.

The long voyage out in the bracing sea air had worked wonders, and few would have recognized the boy who had left London, pale and sickly, in the bronzed, sturdy lad who boarded the Avagee at Penang on the last stage of the journey to Sumatra.
After the great P. and O. liner China, the Avagee seemed small and insignificant. It was a dirty little boat, owned by a Chinese syndicate, and ran between Penang and Belawen, a port on the north-east coast of Sumatra, conveying chiefly the lower-class Chinese tradesmen and coolies. The forward deck—separated by a single plank from the after deck, which was reserved for white passengers—was entirely given over to these gentry. Already the whole place swarmed with them and their big, round baskets of cackling hens and quacking ducks, but a steady stream still kept pouring in from the innumerable sampans surrounding the ship. The noise was deafening as each man fought his way on deck, while the native boatmen shouted and quarrelled amongst themselves and their fares.

As Stanley watched the busy scene, his gaze fell on a Chinaman standing immediately at the top of the companion ladder. Dressed in the usual loose Chinese trousers and jacket, he appeared of a sturdier build than the average coolie, and held his place despite the jostling of his neighbours. His back was turned towards the English lad, but as the latter looked on idly the crowd behind surged forward against the man. Instantly he swung round with a fierce gesture, scowling at the offenders, who quailed visibly under his gaze.
And well they might, for a more repulsive-looking villain it would have been hard to find. The low, receding forehead, high cheek-bones, and cruel mouth were accentuated by a hideous scar across the left side of the face. But above all it was the evil, vindictive gleam in the slanting eyes that made Stanley shudder involuntarily. Regaining his post at the top of the ladder, the fellow remained stationary, and appeared to scan each new arrival in an eager, anxious manner. As time wore on and the sampans departed, he became restless, and when the warning bell rang, seemed to be on the point of leaving the vessel. As he stepped on to the ladder, however, a sampan dashed out from under the lee of a neighbouring steamer and made for the Avagee. After a hurried glance at its occupants, the truculent-looking coolie made for the deck again, and mixing with the swaying throng was speedily lost to sight.

The newcomer, a Chinaman who appeared of a better class than the other passengers, climbed quickly on deck, and mingled with the crowd as though anxious to escape observation. Almost immediately the captain's bell rang, the engines commenced to throb, and the Avagee slipped from her moorings. Down the shallow neck of water she headed between the island of Penang and the Malay Peninsula, and Stanley scanned the island with great interest as it
glided past. The gleaming white buildings of the town of Penang soon gave place to scattered dwellings and groves of cocoanut trees. Here a stolid, grave-faced Chinaman would be tilling his ground with a huge, lazy-going buffalo attached to his antiquated plough. There, a merry group of naked, chocolate-coloured Malay children would be splashing about, enjoying themselves in the sea. As the lighthouse at the southern extremity of the island was passed, the helm was put round and a more easterly course laid for far-away Sumatra. The bell rang "full speed ahead," and Mr. Richards responded with what he afterwards proudly told Stanley was "quite ten knots an hour, sir!" The sea was calm, and the little steamer ploughed her way fussily through the warm blue water, leaving a creamy trail in her wake.

Feeling rather lonely, Stanley fixed his field glasses on a saucy steam yacht rapidly approaching, from which the strains of a band could be heard. As the two ships came abreast of each other the Avagee's captain, a Dane called Hastrup, hurried aft, and with his own hands dipped the Red Ensign in salute, an act which was immediately acknowledged by the yacht as she swept on towards Penang.

"Governor's yacht Sappho," said Captain Hastrup, nodding towards that vessel; "the Governor is evidently going to Penang for the races."
"Where has she come from?" inquired Stanley.

"Singapore. Fine yacht the Sappho, but a bit top heavy in a stiff gale. Finding the time hang on your hands, eh?"

"A little," Stanley confessed; "you see—"

"Oh, I know what you mean," replied the captain, laughing—"this is not a P. and O. liner, nor are there nice young ladies to play games with. We have a set of deck quoits somewhere; but for myself chess is the only game I really care for."

"Chess!" exclaimed Stanley. "My father taught me chess when I was quite a little chap. He was a very good player."

"Capital. We'll have a game, though it's ages since I played last.—Boy!" and to the steward who came running up he gave some orders in Malay.—"Have you picked up any Malay yet?" the captain asked Stanley, when a small table had been brought forward and they were busily engaged in setting out the pieces.

"Just a few words. I'm afraid I'm not very quick at languages."

"Oh, it will come all right," said Captain Hastrup confidently, "once you are away by yourself and have to speak it. Now then, left or right?"

"Left!"

The white men, with the first move, fell to the captain's lot, and soon the game was in full swing.