



THE
JEWELLED
LIZARD



To Hughie.

wishing you many
Happy Returns of
the day from

A & M. McDonald

March 8th 1929



11,320

He took a good grip with his right hand.



THE JEWELLED LIZARD

BY
W. DINGWALL FORDYCE

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

0236-4066



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FOR

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- 2 MAY 1974
Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia

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THE JEWELLED LIZARD

CHAPTER I

THE FINDING OF THE LIZARD.

"**T**HERE! 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-

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haired 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 *Avagee*. 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

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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.

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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.