

## THE LIFE OF DR. ANTONIO NIKOLA (1856-1898?) by Rick Lai

One of the great master criminals of fiction, Dr. Antonio Nikola, originated in a series of novels published in the late Victorian era. He was the creation of a prolific Australian writer, Guy Boothby (1867-1905). In the 1890's, Dr. Nikola's popularity rivaled that of Sherlock Holmes, but this fictional evildoer is now largely forgotten. Nikola appeared in five novels: *A Bid for Fortune* (1895, also known as *Dr. Nikola's Vendetta* and *Enter Dr. Nikola*) (<http://www.heliograph.com/ff/game/ff6/fortune.htm>), *Dr. Nikola* (1896, also published as *Dr. Nikola Returns*), *The Lust of Hate* (1898), *Dr. Nikola's Experiment* (1899) and *Farewell, Nikola* (1901).

Dr. Antonio Nikola was an Italian scientist who had studied mind control and telepathy in the Far East. He could employ hypnotism to halt an assailant in his tracks, or cause people to see images in pools of liquid. He could even send his astral body, along with those of others, back into the past to observe historical events. He had certain powers of prophecy, and supposedly foresaw the means of his own death.

Nikola was a thin man. His height was slightly above average. His hands and feet were small. His hair and eyes were black. His complexion was pale. He possessed an oval shaped face with pearly teeth. He wore on his little finger a gold ring shaped like a snake. The ring contained two black stones meant to be the snake's eyes. His black cat, Apollyon, always accompanied him.

Although extremely ruthless, Nikola was bound by a code of chivalry. He could be incredibly generous in both victory and defeat. Nearly all his noble opponents respected him. Some would later befriend him. A few heroic narrators even aided him in his endeavors. Rather than being the villain whom you love to hate, Nikola is the villain whom you want to like.

Guy Boothby could be extremely careless with details especially chronology. In *A Bid for Fortune* (part 1., chap .1), one paragraph tells us that the novel's narrator, Richard Hatteras, lost both his parents when he was barely a year old. The next paragraph then asserted that his parents perished when Hatteras was fifteen. Hatteras was twenty-eight years old in *A Bid For Fortune* (part 1, chap. 1), and his father's death transpired in 1880 (part 2, chap .4). If Hatteras wasn't less than a year old when his father died, then the events of *A Bid for Fortune* happened in 1908. If Hatteras was fifteen, then the novel was set in 1893. Because *A Bid for Fortune* was published in 1895, it would normally be safe to assume that Boothby did not desire to place the novel in the future year of 1908. However that assumption is exploded when the next novel, *Dr. Nikola* (published in 1896), contains a reference to an earlier event happening in a year identified as 1907 (chap. 1). The possibility that the first two novels were supposedly set in a future decade is contradicted by references that it was still the nineteenth century in *The Lust of Hate* (chap.1) and *Farewell, Nikola* (chap. 7). A remark by Hatteras in *A Bid for Fortune* (part 1, chap. 1) stating that the events of the novel began "four years ago" could lead to the argument that the novel should be placed in 1891, four years prior to its publication. A gap of six months separates the two novels (*Dr. Nikola*, chap. 3), but Nikola's age is given as 33 in *A Bid for Fortune* (part 1, prologue) and as 38 in *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 1). The year of 1895 is also mentioned in *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 1), and this reference would imply that the earlier events of *A Bid for Fortune* transpired no earlier than 1894. In *Farewell, Nikola* (chap. 1), it was stated that a gap of five years separated the final novel from *A Bid for Fortune*. Nevertheless, *Farewell, Nikola* (chap. 2) also contains a contradictory passage, which identified the gap as being only two years. The gap of five years would seem the most logical choice because *Dr. Nikola's*

*Experiment* (chap. 2), the penultimate novel, identified the events of *Dr. Nikola* as transpiring three years earlier.

*Dr. Nikola* concluded with the title character predicting that he would use a highly advanced anesthetic in a scheme that would unfold in less than a year. *The Lust of Hate* had Nikola using the anesthetic to commit multiple murders in London. Assuming that Nikola kept to his timetable, then less than a year should separate the conclusion of *Dr. Nikola* and the beginning of *The Lust of Hate*.

The third novel, *The Lust of Hate*, is the pivotal novel for constructing any chronology of Nikola's notorious career. Nikola became embroiled in an actual historical event. The novel concluded in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where the Matabele (Ndebele) tribe had rebelled against the British colonial authorities. Twice in the 1890's, the British Empire came into conflict with the Matabele. In 1893, the British conquered the Matabele. In 1896, the Matabele rebelled against their British rulers. With characteristic inconsistency, Boothby mixes details from both conflicts to confuse the would-be chronologist.

The internal chronology of *The Lust of Hate* suggests that the Matabele conflict erupted in the autumn of the novel's unspecified year. The novel's narrator, Gilbert Pennethorne, first encountered Nikola in London during the winter. He then fled to Africa and spent over six months there (chap. 10) before Nikola finally located him at the onset of the Matabele struggle. Therefore, one would assume that the Matabele uprising happened in the autumn, a time consistent with the 1893 war, which erupted in October.

However, the military details of *The Lust of Hate* clearly fit the 1896 conflict, which actually began on March 23. Boothby particularly mentioned that the Matabele had surrounded and besieged the British settlers at Buluwayo. This event only happened in 1896. Since the novel was published in 1898, the 1896 argument is strengthened by Pennethorne's assertion that his involvement with Nikola happened two years earlier (*The Lust of Hate*, introduction). It would be logical to argue that Nikola encountered Pennethorne in London during December 1895 or January 1896, and that the interval of Pennethorne's stay in Africa extended beyond six weeks, instead of six months, before it was interrupted by the Matabele uprising. I would choose December 1895 because a longer interval between Pennethorne's flight from London and the Matabele revolt allows him to establish firmer roots in Africa. This interval of several weeks would also be consistent with an assertion by Nikola that he had spent two months searching for Pennethorne in Africa (chap. 12). If we place *The Lust of Hate* in late 1895 to early 1896, the following chronology of the Nikola saga unfolds:

1893	<i>A Bid for Fortune</i>
1894-95	<i>Dr. Nikola</i>
1895-96	<i>The Lust of Hate</i>
1897	<i>Dr. Nikola's Experiment</i>
1898	<i>Farewell, Nikola</i>

When was Nikola born? The age of 38 in *Dr. Nikola*, rather than that of 33 in *A Bid for Fortune*, would be more consistent with references that Nikola had traveled widely around the world committing a massive amount of unrecorded crimes before the first novel. The reference in *A Bid For Fortune* must be a mistake. In *Farewell, Nikola*, we meet Dr. Nikola's stepbrother, a former South American dictator known by the alias of Don Jose de Martinos. Don Jose's age was judged to be between thirty-

five and forty by Richard Hatteras (chap. 6). Nikola was two years older than Don Jose (chap. 4). Nikola was somewhere between thirty-seven and forty-two in 1898. If Dr. Nikola was thirty-eight in 1894, his age in 1898 would be forty-two in *Farewell, Nikola*. Therefore, Dr. Nikola was born in 1856 (1). It is more than probable that Antonio Nikola is an alias. When Don Jose heard Nikola's surname years in 1898 (about thirty years after their childhood together), it meant nothing to him. It is likely to assume that Nikola was born under another surname. Dr. Nikola rarely used his first name of Antonio. In the entire series, it was only mentioned once. This happened when Nikola signed a contract with Pennethorne in *The Lust of Hate*.

The maiden name of Dr. Nikola's mother was Revecce. She came from a prominent Venetian family that had fallen on hard times. Her ancestral home was the Palace Revecce. Her most notable ancestor was Francisco del Revecce, who lived circa 1509. Although a courageous soldier, the Admiral could be a vindictive enemy. His wife had not only committed adultery, but had plotted with her lover to frame her husband for treason. Revecce had the lover buried alive, and then cut out his wife's tongue. The Admiral's combination of courage and cruelty was a family trait reflected in Nikola.

In 1855, Dr. Nikola's mother entered into a loveless marriage with a man much older than herself. Nikola was born in the following year. The family lived at the Palace Revecce. When Nikola was three years old (1859), his father died. Nikola's mother in Venice then married a Spaniard, who was appointed "Governor of one of the Spanish islands off the American coast" (*Farewell, Nikola*, chap. 4). The island was probably Cuba because Nikola's stepbrother owned a tobacco plantation there (chap. 6). Some time after her second husband took up his official position on the island, the young Nikola and his mother traveled there. The Governor then revealed that he already had a wife before his marriage to Nikola's mother. Abandoned by the Governor, Nikola's mother and her son were forced to live in poverty. When Nikola was five years old (1861), his mother died. Nikola was adopted by an elderly couple. Nikola's foster father was a great scholar and an expert in the occult. Nikola loved this scholar deeply, and learned many arcane mysteries from him. When Nikola was twelve (1868), both his foster parents died. The Governor was then looking for a companion for his own son. Not realizing that Nikola was the son of the woman whom he had wronged, the Governor arranged to gain custody of the young boy. When the Governor finally saw the young Nikola, he recognized him by his resemblance to his late mother. Both the Governor and his ten-year old son abused Nikola brutally. Nikola was frequently whipped on their orders. His stepbrother often slandered the memory of Nikola's mother. Nikola's worse punishment happened when he futilely attacked his stepbrother with a knife. This punishment resulted in Nikola being tortured by the Governor's servants with hot pincers. Scars covered Nikola's right arm and shoulder for the rest of his life as a result of this ordeal. Shortly after this punishment, Nikola fled the Governor's palace and the island.

If this island was indeed Cuba, then Nikola probably fled just before a violent rebellion, the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), began in October 1868. This insurrection was a failed attempt to gain Cuba's independence from Spain. The cruelty of Nikola's stepfather may have sparked this rebellion.

At some point in his life, Nikola fell under the influence of an unscrupulous Englishman, a former Oxford don who "went wrong" (*Dr. Nikola*, chap. 1). It is probable that this Oxford don was an early mentor of Nikola, and their friendship began shortly after Nikola fled the Caribbean island. Possibly Nikola lived with this Englishman until he reached his early twenties. This Oxford don had spent some years in northwest China, and told Nikola rumors of a powerful Chinese secret society whose main headquarters was in Tibet.

Beginning in the late 1870's, Nikola traveled extensively in the Far East. He studied hypnotism with an old woman in Benares, India (*A Bid for Fortune*, part 1, chap. 2). It was probably this old woman who prophesied that Nikola would one day save the life of a young Englishwoman and fall in love with her. He also gained possession of a black cat, which he named Apollyon (after the Angel of the Abyss in *Revelations*). Nikola began to establish his own criminal organization. During the 1880's, Nikola was committing crimes on a global scale. Assisting Nikola in his illegal exploits were three capable agents, Eastover, William Prendergast and Baxter. Until 1893, each of these operatives worked independent of one another, and never saw their sinister employer in the flesh. We know little of the background of Nikola's subordinates except for a hint that Baxter had once been sentenced to a penal settlement in the Andaman Islands. During 1880-1890, Eastover performed four separate assignments for Nikola with these locations: 1) Nashville, Tennessee, 2) Tahupapa, New Zealand, 3) Papeete in the Society Islands, 4) Peking (Beijing), China. In the same period, Prendergast handled four missions: 1) Brussels, Belgium, 2) Montevideo, Uruguay, 3) Mandalay, Burma (Myanmar), and 4) the Gold Coast (Ghana) in Africa. Within the same time frame Baxter participated in three criminal operations: 1) Kabul, Afghanistan, 2) Nijni Novgorod, Russia, and 3) Wilcannia, Darling River. By the start of 1890's, Nikola had amassed a considerable reputation. He had performed additional criminal acts in Malaysia, Japan, and India. He was feared by the King of Korea, the Sultan of Borneo, the coal porters of Port Said, the Buddhist priests of Ceylon, the monks of Tibet, the priests of Manila, the government ministers of Siam (Thailand) and the French colonial authorities of Saigon. The Chinese christened Nikola "the man with the Devil's eyes."

In addition to Eastover, Prendergast, and Baxter, the master criminal also recruited a loyal personal servant in the 1880's. Ah-Win, the confidential servant to the Viceroy of Kweichow, had been arrested for attempting to assassinate his employer with poisoned rice. Ah-Win was sentenced to *ling-chi*, "the death of a thousand cuts" (*The Lust of Hate*, chap. 1). Nikola was able to use his influence with certain Chinese authorities to have Ah Win freed. However, Ah-Win was released after being gruesomely tortured. His nose was slit and his left ear was severed from his head. Probably his tongue was also removed. Ah-Win became deaf and dumb as a result of his ordeal. Becoming Nikola's personal service, Ah-Win's talents as a lip reader allowed him to follow his master's every command. A broad man, Ah-Win was six feet three inches tall.

Besides henchmen, Nikola also assembled a huge collection of freaks for scientific study. These human oddities included a Burmese monkey-boy, an albino dwarf, and a native of northern India whose head was three times too big for his body. Many of these freaks were discovered in remote corners of the world (2), but others were probably the results of Nikola's bizarre experiments. These freaks were housed by Nikola in a house in Port Said, Egypt. Besides his Egyptian headquarters, Nikola also maintained residences in India, China, Japan, Peru and the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia. Nikola even reacquired his mother's ancestral home, the Palace Revecce, in Venice.

In 1886, Nikola spent considerable time with an old Buddhist priest (*Dr. Nikola*, chap. 1) in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). This priest gave Nikola further information about the Chinese secret society whose existence had been earlier discussed with the former Oxford don. The society was founded in 288 B. C. by three priests from the island of Ceylon. They had left their native island and journeyed to Burma and then Tibet. Two of the original monks died in Tibet, but the remaining monk established a monastery there. This monastery was a center of occult learning for centuries. It also became the headquarters of a secret society that controlled the Triad tongs of China. A stick with Chinese characters could be used as a passport to enter the monastery. A trio of monks, known as the Three, always ruled the society from the

monastery. After leaving the monastery in 1886, a member of the Three died mysteriously. Although the exact manner of his death was never stated, the obvious implication was that unknown parties murdered him. One of the sticks was removed from his corpse and disappeared. The murdered monk's position on the ruling council remained vacant for years.

Dr. Nikola became determined to gain possession of this stick. Concurrent with the search for the stick, Nikola also sought other clues concerning the Three during 1886-1890. In Montevideo (Prendergast's second assignment), Nikola found a man who could describe an obscure Chinese village. In the Gold Coast (Prendergast's fourth assignment), he learned the name of a certain Buddhist priest. In Nijni Novgorod (Baxter's second assignment), Nikola gained a Chinese symbol from a Russian Jew. In China, Nikola found Laohwan, a minor member of the Chinese secret society. Falling under Nikola's influence, Laohwan was willing to assist the criminal in his campaign to uncover the Three's secrets.

In 1891, after passing through various diverse hands, the stick had been recovered by an operative of the Three. This man was the abbot of the Yung Ho Kung, a Chinese monastery. Also called the Llamaserai, this monastery was located on the outskirts of Peking. As a reward for his regaining the stick, the abbot was elected to fill the vacancy on the society's ruling triumvirate. One of Nikola's underlings, an Englishman named China Pete, decided to betray his master and grab the stick for himself. Before the monk could leave for Tibet to formally be invested as one of the Three, China Pete, disguised himself as a Tibetan monk in order to enter the Llamaserai. There he killed the abbot and stole the stick (3). On six occasions in Peking, minions of the Three tried to murder China Pete in order to regain the stick. On a ship bound from Shanghai to Sydney, another assassin of the secret society tried to regain the stick. China Pete slew this agent. Tried for murdered in Australia, China Pete was acquitted due to the efforts of his barrister, Sylvester Wetherell. Shortly after his acquittal, China Pete died from consumption. On his deathbed, China Pete gave the stick to Wetherell and warned him about Nikola. Nikola arrived in Australia on the trail of the Chinese stick. He first attempted to buy the stick from Wetherell. When Wetherell refused, Nikola unsuccessfully tried to steal the stick from Wetherell on numerous occasions over the following months. At the same time, agents of the Three were trying to rob Wetherell of the stick. Since China Pete had never mentioned the Three before he perished, Wetherell attributed all these attempted robberies to Nikola.

Nikola had to leave Australia in mid-1891 when he received a summons from Chile. His old mentor, the former Oxford don, had become involved in the Chilean Civil War, which lasted from January to September 1891. Chilean politics was then dominated by a bitter rivalry between the Liberal and Conservative parties. The conflict had erupted when President J. M. Balmaceda, a Liberal, declared that he would rule without the consent of the Congress, then controlled by the Conservatives. Nikola's old English mentor had joined the rebels. He discovered that also serving in the rebel forces was Nikola's stepbrother. Receiving this information in a message from his English mentor, Nikola now saw an opportunity to settle an old score. Nikola dispatched Baxter to Valparaiso, Chile. Soon Nikola arrived in Chile himself. Nikola was unable to locate his stepbrother. As for the former Oxford don, he was captured by Balmaceda's forces and executed in Santiago (4). The Civil war ended when a Conservative victory caused Balmaceda to commit suicide. Even though Nikola was preoccupied with vengeance during this Chilean escapade (5), he hadn't forgotten Wetherell. Nikola wrote him a letter from South America threatening dire consequences against the barrister, his wife and his daughter if the stick was not surrendered. In their master's absence, Nikola's agents continued to harass Wetherell

When Wetherell described his persecution by Nikola on two separate occasions, *A Bid for Fortune* (part 2, chap. 5) and *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 2), the barrister gave the impression that Nikola's persecution was constant and unrelenting. However, there must have been a lull of months when Nikola's operatives ignored Wetherell (6). In 1892, Wetherell had enough presence of mind to become elected to the colonial parliament of New South Wales, Australia. His political party quickly rewarded him with the position of Colonial Secretary of New South Wales.

In 1892, Nikola and Baxter journeyed to Nagasaki, Japan. After the completion of the Japanese operation, Baxter went to England and Nikola to Seoul, Korea. There Nikola and a criminal associate, Mr. Williams, taught a rival criminal, Mah Feng, a lesson that he would never forget. Nikola then went to Cuyaba, a town on the Brazilian border near Bolivia. For six months, he tracked a merchant whose had previously spent years buying gold leaf in western China. The merchant had valuable information about the Three. After finding the merchant, Dr. Nikola sent instructions to Eastover in China, Prendergast in South Africa, and Baxter in England to finally meet him at a hotel in London.

Besides those three henchmen, Nikola considered bringing two other associates, Vendon and Brownlow, into the plot against Werherell. However, their status of these accomplices in late 1892 had rendered their further employment impossible. Nikola had recently learned that Vendon was dead. As for Brownlow, he had proven unfaithful.

As described in *A Bid For Fortune*, the hotel meeting happened in early 1893. Not only was this the first time the trio of agents met each other, it was the first time they laid eyes on their mysterious employer. Nikola utilized his henchmen in a complex scheme to abduct Wetherell's daughter, Phyllis, in Australia. Despite the opposition of Richard Hatteras, Phyllis' gallant suitor, and the young Marquis of Beckenham, Nikola's plan succeeded. Wetherell was forced to surrender the Chinese stick. Throughout their struggle, Nikola respected his opponents. He showed this respect by mailing Phyllis a diamond *collat* as a wedding present after she married Hatteras (7).

Having secured the stick, Nikola immediately left for China. There Nikola caused one of his enemies, Hanotat, to commit suicide with a revolver. As preparations for his scheme against the Three began, Nikola traveled to Haiphong in Vietnam and then to Singapore during the second half of 1893. In Haiphong, he involved a British seaman, Benwell of the Chinese Revenue Service (8), in an unrecorded criminal endeavor. Although Benwell survived this encounter, it became impossible for him ever to return to Haiphong. In Singapore, Nikola again crossed wits with Mah Feng, the criminal rival whom had been bested earlier in Seoul.

In 1894, the events of *Dr. Nikola* transpired. Three years after the death of the last candidate to assume the empty seat on the Three, the Chief Priest of Hankow was finally chosen to assume that position. Nikola's plan was to abduct the Chief Priest and impersonate him. To assist in this plot, Nikola hired Wilfred Bruce, an English adventurer with several years' experience in China. Nikola and Bruce disguised themselves as Chinese. After Eastover and Prendergast abducted the priest, Nikola and Bruce used the stick to enter the Tibetan monastery that served as the society's base (9). Of the two surviving members of the Three, one was an incredibly old European while the other was a middle-aged man of either Arab or Jewish descent. Nikola was about to be invested as a member of the Three, when the real Chief Priest, who had escaped captivity, suddenly appeared. Their imposture exposed, Nikola and Bruce were imprisoned and sentenced to death by the Three. Before the verdict could be carried out, Nikola and Bruce escaped. Fleeing the monastery, they purloined phials, parchments, drugs, and a book that detailed the secret of reversing the aging process. In late 1894, Nikola and Bruce separated in China.

Three months later, Nikola and Bruce were reunited in London during 1895. During their separation, the Three's assassins had unsuccessfully tried to murder Nikola three times in China. They then failed again in Rangoon, Burma and in Bombay, India. They even made a further attempts in London. Nikola warned Bruce about the assassins particularly their leader, Quong Ma. This relentless pursuer could be recognized by the fact that half his left ear was missing (10). Nikola told Bruce that he intended to travel to St. Petersburg to see a French chemist. One of the items stolen by Nikola was a powerful anesthetic developed by the Three. Nikola hoped to have the anesthetic modified in order to "enlighten" Britain in "a fashion it will not forget." This enlightenment would happen in "less than a year." Actually, Nikola went to Paris first and then to St. Petersburg. In both places, Quong Ma made further assassination attempts (11). Besides seeking to punish Nikola for his penetration of the Tibetan monastery, Quong Ma also sought to regain possession of the book stolen by the mastermind.

After conferring with the French chemist in St. Petersburg, Nikola discovered that the anesthetic could also be transformed into a powerful poison gas. He then concocted a convoluted scheme involving the poison gas. Nikola's murder plot is depicted in *The Lust of Hate*. With a plethora of loose ends left dangling at its conclusion, this novel is the most frustrating entry in the series. The novel began brilliantly as a bizarre melodrama, and then deteriorated into a routine adventure story.

In 1895, Gilbert Pennethorne was swindled out of an incredibly valuable Australian gold mine by Richard Bartrand. When Bartrand became the darling of London society, Pennethorne was consumed by a desire for vengeance. Bartrand's vast wealth came to the notice of Nikola, who unsuccessfully attempted to extort money from the new millionaire (12). Although Nikola's threats failed to yield any profits, the mastermind unearthed a startling fact. Haunted by guilt over the gold mine swindle, Bartrand had written a will naming Pennethorne his heir.

At the same time, London was rocked by two sensational murders. The victims were Major General Brackington, a prominent Member of Parliament, and Lord Beryworth, the former colonial governor of an Australian colony. The autopsy on both men concluded that they had died from an anesthetic overdose. For some unknown reason, each man's left eyebrow had been surgically removed. Dr. Nikola was behind both murders. He had constructed a hansom cab that released his poison cab into the passenger's compartment (13). Both victims had been lured into the carriage and slain. Their bodies were then dumped into deserted street by activating a trapdoor in the bottom of the cab.

Nikola contacted Pennethorne, and informed him of Bartrand's will. Nikola and Pennethorne concluded an agreement. In exchange for fifty thousand pound to be paid within six months after Pennethorne inherited Bartrand's wealth, Nikola would give Pennethorne the means to kill Bartrand. Nikola loaned his client the specially equipped hansom cab to achieve Bartrand's demise. Nikola hinted that parallel arrangements had been made between him and other individuals in the past. He even stated that a similar situation had arisen three months ago. Nikola's comments suggested that an earlier murder had been done with the poison gas before Brackington and Beryworth. In his instructions to Pennethorne, Nikola surprisingly made no reference to severing the victim's eyebrow.

Suspecting that Pennethorne may bungle the assignment, Nikola took the precaution to give Bartrand a drug just before the intended victim entered the hansom cab. Thus, a sleeping Bartrand should be easy prey to the poison gas. Pennethorne was left totally in the dark about the drug. While driving the cab, Pennethorne's conscience convinced him to abandon the murder plot. Stopping the cab and opening the passenger's compartment, Pennethorne mistakenly concluded that the unconscious Bartrand was dead as a result of an accidental release of the

poison gas. Pennethorne decided to flee legal retribution. Hearing a newspaper vendor cry the headline about another "terrible murder in London," Pennethorne assumed that Bartand's death was being reported. We never learn anything further about the murder cited in the newspaper. Either this murder was a totally unrelated crime, or Nikola murdered someone else the same night with his poison gas. Pennethorne left London on the first available ship. Bartrand woke up, realized that Nikola must have tried to kill him, and also fled London. Nikola assumed that Bartrand was dead. Although Boothby doesn't state it, Nikola must have falsely reasoned that Pennethorne had secretly disposed of the body before his flight from London.

Pennethorne then became involved in a shipwreck that left him marooned on an island. After being rescued by a passing ship, he made his way to Africa. Seeking to make amends, Bartrand traced Pennethorne to Africa. Nikola also arrived in Africa seeking Pennethorne. In the midst of the Matabele uprising of 1893, Bartrand and Pennethorne are reunited. Pennethorne was relieved to discover that he was not a murderer. Pennethorne convinced Bartrand, dying from wounds inflicted by the Matabele rebels, to sign a new will leaving all his money to the hospitals of London. After Bartrand's death, Nikola arrived on the scene. His intent now was not to settle for a mere fee of fifty thousand pounds, but to somehow extort the entire Bartrand fortune out of Pennethorne. Realizing that he had lost all chance of possessing Bartrand's wealth, Nikola was a gracious loser. Nikola also stated that if he had gained the money, then six months later he could have implemented a terrible plan. This plot "would have paralyzed Europe" and would have cost the loss of "half-a-million lives."

At this point, the novel ended with a mess of unanswered questions. What was Nikola's scheme against Europe? Why were the other men murdered? How many victims of the poison gas were there? Why were the eyebrows severed from the victims? How did Pennethorne's absence cause Nikola's plan to unravel?

Here's a theory to answer all these questions. Nikola's ultimate purpose was to gain enough funds to manufacture his poison gas as a weapon of war. He intended to sell the gas to Germany in order to launch a new European war (14). Nikola could have just sold the formula to Germany, but that would not make the Kaiser's military machine dependent on him. Intending to keep the secret of the gas for himself, he planned to manufacture it in vast quantities for sale to Germany. In order to gain money to finance his scheme, he made a deal with an heir to vast wealth three months before the deaths of Brackington and Beryworth. The heir was given the poison gas to slay the current holder of the fortune. Once the heir received the money, he would pay Nikola's fee. Although the murder was successful, the heir did fall under suspicion. Luckily for Nikola, the police could not find enough evidence to arrest the heir. Nikola intended to plot similar murders, but he realized that there was fatal flaw in his *modus operandi*. The heir to the murder victim immediately came under suspicion. Therefore, he must do something to divert suspicion from the heirs who would use his deadly gas in the future. Nikola then came up with his hansom cab idea.

Nikola remembered the uproar caused by the Jack the Ripper murders of 1888. If Nikola made all his future murders look like the work of a deranged serial killer, the police would ignore the obvious suspect in each individual murder (15). Nikola contacted the heirs of Brackington and Beryworth, made financial arrangement with both of them, and gave them the cab to murderously secure their inheritance. Before the bodies were dumped through the cab's trap door, Nikola's clients removed the eyebrows of the victims. This procedure guaranteed that the police would link the deaths together. The missing eyebrows also increased the general perception that the murders were the work of a deranged maniac. The police concluded that there was some insane killer, armed with anesthetic, prowling the

London streets on foot. Nikola created the illusion of a lone serial killer targeting the millionaires of London's West End.

On the same night, Nikola plotted the murders of Bartrand and one other millionaire. Two hansom cabs with a poison gas apparatus must have been constructed. The first was given to Pennethorne, the second to Nikola's other confederate. Nikola's intent was to stage a double murder in imitation of the "Double Event" of 1888 in which Jack The Ripper murdered two prostitutes on the same night. In the "Double Event," the Ripper, who usually disemboweled his victims, only had time to slice his victim's throat in the first murder. This discrepancy in the Ripper's normal *modus operandi* had been attributed to an interruption caused by an approaching vehicle. The conventional wisdom is that the Ripper, dissatisfied by his failure to complete his grisly surgery on the first prostitute, needed to find another victim to satisfy his bloodlust. Nikola wanted to create a similar impression about his own "Double Event." Thus, Pennethorne was giving no orders about severing Bartrand's eyebrow. Nikola's other accomplice was told to sever his victim's eyebrow before dumping the body. The police were supposed to assume that a single murderer had killed Bartrand, had been interrupted somehow before collecting his victim's eyebrow, and then gone off in search of another victim.

If Bartrand had died, Nikola would have secured enough funds for his poison gas factory and there would have been no more murders. Pennethorne's actions caused Nikola to seek a different victim to secure the final amount of money necessary for the manufacture of the poison gas. This decision by Nikola resulted in the failure of his master plan.

There was extreme pressure on the British government to solve these murders. The greatest detective in the land was hired to stop these slayings. This brilliant sleuth noted the similarity of the recent deaths of Brackington, Beryworth and the other unnamed millionaire to the earlier death three months ago. Remembering that the heir of the victim had been the likely culprit in the original case, the detective concluded that there had really been four victims in total. Clearly all the victims' heirs were implicated, but the mastermind behind these killings needed to be found. The ace investigator, a master of disguise, impersonated a disgruntled heir to a fortune. Nikola contacted his disguised nemesis and attempted to conclude a murder contract. Nikola then made the further mistake of taking the undercover investigator to his headquarters. Alerted by the detective, the police raided Nikola's base. The mastermind escaped, but enough evidence was found to arrest the four heirs who had functioned as Nikola's accomplices. During their murder trial, the heirs still remained afraid of Nikola and refused to implicate him firmly in the murders (16). With the arrest of the heirs, Nikola lost any chance of receiving his fees for the murders. His only hope now was to somehow secure the entire Bartrand fortune in Africa, but Pennethorne prevented this by convincing Bartrand to change his will.

Who was the sleuth who prevented Nikola's scheme from succeeding? He was a man with a very celebrated name. Although the name of this detective is associated with another writer, Boothby mentioned the name in another of his works. Boothby's *A Prince of Swindlers* (1900, also known as *The Viceroy's Protégé*), a book linked to the Nikola series, clearly cited the name of this sleuth in a context that establishes his co-existence with Boothby's characters. *A Prince of Swindlers*, a collection of short stories, featured the Earl of Amberley, a character from *A Bid for Fortune*. In the earlier Nikola story, the Earl was retiring as Governor of New South Wales in Australia. *A Prince of Swindlers* revealed that the Earl, assumed the position of Viceroy of India soon thereafter. In India, the Earl, shortly before he would retire as Viceroy, befriended Simon Carne, who was really a clever criminal. Carne secretly arrived in London early in the following year. There he adopted the identity of a private detective, Klimo, who became a public celebrity. In May of the

same year, the criminal then pretended to arrive in London using his Simon Carne identity. In "The Duchess of Wiltshire's Diamonds," it was claimed that the British public thought that Klimo had secured "the right to be considered as great as Lecocq, or even the late lamented Sherlock Holmes" (17).

Boothby's reference to "the late lamented Sherlock Holmes" resulted from the detective's supposed death at Reichenbach Falls during 1891 (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Final Problem"). Holmes actually survived, and was believed dead until he returned to London in the spring of 1894 ("The Adventure of the Empty House"). After leaving his position of Governor on New South Wales in 1893 (*A Bid for Fortune*), the Earl must have assumed the position of Viceroy of India for a few months (18). In 1894, Carne adopted the identity of Klimo months before the return of Sherlock Holmes in the same year (19). Therefore, the public still assumed Holmes was dead when Carne made his appearance as Carne. In his two identities, respected as Carne in high society and as Klimo by the general public, Carne then committed a series of ingenious robberies.

The return of Holmes complicated matters for both Carne and Nikola. Carne was forced to flee London in 1894 when a man from India arrived with the truth about the criminal's background. I believe Holmes became suspicious of Carne and wired to India requesting the authorities to investigate his background. This request for information led to Carne's exposure. During 1895-96, it was unquestionably Holmes who ruined Nikola's great murder plot in London. Having traveled around Tibet, Persia (Iran), Arabia and the Sudan during the years in which he was presumed dead (20), Holmes must have heard rumors of the notorious Dr. Nikola. The great sleuth would have immediately surmised that the author of such a complex series of murders could only be Nikola.

After leaving Pennethorne in southern Africa during 1896, Nikola stopped at the Cape Coast Castle in the Gold Coast (Ghana), where he cured a native of Sleeping Sickness. He spent remainder of 1896 attempting to duplicate an experiment described in the book stolen from the Tibetan monastery. This experiment was performed a thousand years ago by the secret society. Utilizing the application of electricity on the human body, the experiment reversed the aging process and gave the human subject a lifespan of a thousand years. Only one person was allowed to receive this treatment by the rules of the Three. Presumably this experiment was performed on a member of the ruling council, and was probably done only once. The enigmatic European member of the Three was the most likely recipient of the original experiment's longevity. Whether this experiment could be done again on the same person, after an interval of a thousand years, is not addressed. Perhaps Quong Ma's intense search for the book was prompted by the need that the experiment must soon be performed again on the ancient European. Dr. Nikola attempted this experiments three times in 1896. Each time, his subject perished as a consequence of an assistant's inattention. Statements by Nikola describing these experiments implied that the assistants received death as a reward for their ineptitude.

In late 1896, Nikola visited St. Petersburg and met Dr. Andrew Kelleran. Asked by Nikola to recommend a capable assistant, Kelleran suggested Dr. Douglas Ingelby. In 1897, Nikola offered Ingelby employment at the start of *Dr. Nikola's Experiment*. Although an honest man, Ingelby fell under the spell of the charismatic Nikola and accepted the position. The headquarters of the mastermind was now Allerdeyne Castle, an ancient fortress overlooking the North Sea, in Northumberland. Besides Nikola, there resided in the Castle his old servant Ah-Win as well as the collection of freaks formerly housed in Port Said. Nikola secured the cooperation of an elderly Spaniard, Don Miguel de Moreno, to act as the subject of his fifth experiment. The experiment restored Don Miguel's youth, but unfortunately also destroyed his mind. Quong Ma, the assassin who had been searching for Nikola

since 1894, invaded Allerdeyne Castle and killed Ah-Win. In a fight on the fortress' parapets, both Quong Ma and the insane Don Miguel fell to their doom locked in each other's arms. The novel ended with Ingelby leaving Nikola's service.

*Dr. Nikola's Experiment* is arguably the best novel in the series. Its imagery of weird electrical experiments in a castle may have influenced the later cinematic adaptations of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. That classic novel had no castle and no descriptions of electrical experiments. In *Dr. Nikola*, the title character and Wilfred Bruce witnessed a procedure by which the Tibetan monks brought a corpse, who had been dead for ten hours, brought back to life by the application of electricity. If Nikola had stolen a book about that procedure, rather than the longevity process, then the events of *Dr. Nikola's Experiment* could have resembled a Frankenstein movie even more closely

In *Dr. Nikola's Experiment*, the brilliant criminal was openly traveling around Britain in his own identity. How can this be? At the very least, he would be wanted on kidnapping charges arising from his 1893 activities in *A Bid for Fortune*. If my theory about *The Lust of Hate* is correct, then a highly respected British detective compiled evidence that Nikola was behind multiple murders. I am forced to reach a shocking conclusion. Nikola was granted a full pardon for past crimes by Her Majesty's Government. During his visit to southern Africa in quest of Pennethorne, Nikola must have uncovered valuable intelligence information concerning the Matabele insurgents (21). He gave this information to the British colonial authorities in exchange for a promise that they would lobby London to pardon his crimes. The pardon was granted sometime in 1896.

*Farewell, Nikola* described the mastermind's efforts to set his affairs in order before embarking on one last endeavor. Depressed by the failure of his last experiment, Nikola was still willing to make a fifth attempt to grant extreme longevity to a human being. However, this time the subject of the experiment would be Nikola himself. He intended to return to Tibet in order to visit "a lonely monastery in a range of eastern mountains, upon which no Englishman has every set foot" (chap. 12). This monastery will be the site of Nikola's final experiment.

At this point, the astute reader of Nikola's exploits begins to wonder what has suddenly happened. How can Nikola return to Tibet? He was marked for death by the most powerful secret society in Asia. What monastery was Nikola now going to? It can't be the monastery of the Three because an Englishman, Wilfred Bruce, did set foot there. Is there another secret society, a rival to the Three, in Asia?

Unfortunately, Guy Boothby did not provide any answers, so I must once again construct a theory to explain this discrepancy in the series. Enraged at Quong Ma's recent attack, Nikola decided it was time to remove the menace of the Three. He didn't possess the resources alone to destroy the Three. He needed allies to help him liquidate the Three. There must be some indigenous enemies to the Three in Asia. Someone else other than Nikola murdered that member of the Three in 1886, an event that sent the Chinese stick on an odyssey of five years before it reached Wetherell's hands. The Three must have nearly annihilated a rival secret society centuries ago. In a severely weakened state, this society lingered in Asia waiting to be reawakened as a major threat to world stability. Nikola contacted the remnants of this society and offered them a deal. In exchange for his formula for poison gas, they agreed to manufacture the gas in sufficient quantity to kill the Three and all the other inhabitants of their Tibetan headquarters. Once the inhabitants of the monastery were dead, Nikola's allies would raid the lamasery and find all the Three's scientific secrets. Nikola and his allies agreed to share the secrets. The poison gas was used successfully against the Three's headquarters, but a fire broke out which destroyed all the Three's records. With the destruction of the Three, the tongs of China were thrown in disarray and gradually came under the leadership of Nikola's

allies. Nikola then requested the use a monastery controlled by his allies to conduct his final experiment (22).

Before embarking for Tibet, Nikola went to the Palace Revecce, his old family home in Venice. He hoped to achieve a long cherished dream of revenge. Nikola's stepbrother, the person responsible for the scars on his right arm and shoulder, was coming to Venice. According to *Farewell, Nikola*, Nikola's stepbrother had become the dictator of Equinata, a Latin American country. When a revolution broke out in Equinata, Nikola's stepbrother ordered the execution of the eldest son of every influential family in a rebellious city. The revolution succeeded, and Nikola's stepbrother was forced to flee Equinata (23).

Equinata is a fictional name. Equinata was first identified as being in South America (*Farewell. Nikola*, chap. 4), but it was then relocated in Central America by Guy Boothby (chap. 6). There were no revolutions in Central America during the 1880's or 1890's. The name "Equinata" is similar to that of the South American country of Ecuador. In 1895, the President of Ecuador, Luis Cordero, resigned as a result of an armed insurgency against his rule. Like Chile in 1891, Ecuador was dominated by a struggle between Conservative and Liberal political parties. While Chile saw a Conservative revolt against a Liberal President, Ecuador experienced a Liberal revolt against a Conservative President. Luis Cordero cannot be Nikola's stepbrother. Cordero did not fight in Chile against Balmaceda in 1891. There is clearly some distortion of political reality in Boothby's description of Nikola's stepbrother. Rather than a dictator, Nikola's stepbrother must have been a mercenary who traveled around Latin America selling his service to Conservative politicians. He served in the Conservative revolution against Balmaceda in 1891, and was probably one of Cordero's military commanders who unsuccessfully tried to suppress the Liberal revolution of 1895.

In preparations for the arrival of his stepbrother in Venice, Nikola reacquainted himself with the workings of that city's underworld. Nikola learned of the recent death of Pietro Sallomi in a duel. The duel had been rigged by the supposedly impartial referee, Burmaceda, to result in Sallomi's death.

In 1898, three of Nikola's former adversaries from *A Bid For Fortune* arrived in Venice. They were Richard Hatteras, his wife Phyllis, and the Duke of Glenbarth, who had been the Marquis of Beckenham in 1893. Also present in Venice was Gertrude Trevor, one of Phyllis' friends and an apparent clairvoyant. When Hatteras encounter Nikola in the streets of Venice, the criminal genius treated him more like an old friend rather than a former adversary. Nikola invited Hatteras and the Duke to dinner at the Palace Revecce. Although initially taken aback, Hatteras and the Duke accept. While the Duke remained suspicious of Nikola, Hatteras developed a friendly attitude towards the criminal genius. Hatteras and his circle begin to socialize with Nikola on a regular basis. On meeting Gertrude, Nikola, who been described as an ascetic and a woman-hater in previous novels, remembered the old prophecy that he would fall in love.

In the identity of Don Jose de Martinos, Nikola's stepbrother then came to Venice. Nikola, the Duke and Don Jose all develop romantic feelings towards Gertrude. When Gertrude was struck down with a fever that no other doctor in Venice could treat, Nikola cured her illness. The Duke and Don Jose quarrel over Gertrude. With Burmaceda's help, Don Jose plotted to murder the Duke in an uneven duel. Nikola intervened to prevent the duel. After Don Jose lost all his money gambling, Nikola then invited the fugitive to stay at the Palace Revecce. Unaware that Nikola was really his childhood enemy, Don Jose accepted. Using a combination of mesmerism and injections, Nikola began to transform Don Jose into a dog-like creature. It can be deduced that some of the freaks in Nikola's collection were victims of similar experiments.

Learning of Nikola's treatment of Don Jose through her clairvoyance, Gertrude rushed to the Palace Revecce and begged Nikola not to imperil his immortal soul by punishing Don Jose. Out of love for Gertrude, Nikola restored Don Jose to normal. Setting Don Jose free, Nikola gave his stepbrother twenty thousand pounds. Clearly unrepentant, Don Jose left Venice. Nikola's then departed for Tibet. After Nikola's departure, Gertrude had a vision of Nikola in a Tibetan monastery. Looking old and a pale shadow of his former self, Nikola was dressed in the yellow robes of a Tibetan monk. In this vision, Nikola asked Gertrude to forget him. Sometime later, Gertrude married the Duke of Glenbarth.

Gertrude's vision implied that Nikola's final experiment would backfire on him. Instead of granting him a thousand-year lifespan, it would accelerate his aging process and eventually cause his death (24). In my opinion, Guy Boothby provided a fitting final fate for Nikola.

I have read a few commentaries on Dr. Nikola that claim that he merely retired to the monastery in the last novel to become a Buddhist monk. That is not the fate for Nikola that Boothby implied. Besides Gertrude's vision of a prematurely aged Nikola, there are other clues to the criminal's final destiny in *Farewell, Nikola*. Nikola asserted that the longevity experiment would be performed again (chap. 2). Alluding to his own vision of his final demise, Nikola stated that it would be "an end worthy of myself" (chap. 4). Nikola later remarked that no one would ever see him outside the monastery's walls (chap. 12). Beside these important utterances, Nikola was pessimistic and brooding throughout the novel. He knew that his quest for scientific knowledge would finally result in his own death.

*Farewell, Nikola* should have been the end of nefarious adventurer's career, but he would emerge years later to battle Doc Savage, the pulp hero of the 1930's and 1940's. You won't find this confrontation described in any of the novels written by Lester Dent and other writers. This epic battle transpired in *Doom Dynasty*, a 2-part original comic book adventure published by Millennium Comics in 1991. I enjoy this comic book immensely, but I view it as an "alternate history" version of Nikola's final fate (25). For the benefit of those readers who disagree with my assessment of *Doom Dynasty*, I will, nevertheless seek to reconcile the comic book with the timeline which has already been constructed here.

The comic story written by Terry Collins sought to answer a mystery of the original Doc Savage pulp magazine series. Doc Savage was the result of an experiment by scientists to raise a young boy into a crime-fighter against evil. This program of training had been the brainchild of Doc's father, Clark Savage Sr. Why did Doc's father do this? Philip Jose Farmer had offered the theory that Doc's father was a former criminal consumed by guilt. However, this theory does not take into account a reference in one of Lester Dent's novels, *No Light to Die By* (first published in the May-June 1947 issue of Doc Savage). In a letter, Doc claimed that his father originated this idea as a consequence of being "victimized by criminals." At the very least, Mr. Farmer's theory would have to be modified to take this reference into account (26). Ignoring Mr. Farmer's speculations, *Doom Dynasty* identifies the criminal victimizing Doc's family as Nikola.

According to *Doom Dynasty*, Doc Savage's grandfather, Richard Henry Savage (27), met Doctor Nikola in Russia during 1896. The charismatic Nikola gained Savage funding for the proposed creation of medical vaccines. Actually, Nikola is planning to manufacture a mutated plague (28). Discovering Nikola's evil plans, Savage destroyed the plague in a fire. Nikola was injured in the fire, but his female assistant Li was able to successfully treat Nikola with the rare silphium herb (29). On November 21, 1901, the day when Doc Savage was born, Richard Henry Savage was killed in an "accident" staged by Nikola (30).

Dr. Nikola discovered that the silphium was retarding his aging process. By the 1930's, Nikola was still alive with the appearance of a middle-aged man. In the

early twentieth century, Nikola had an affair with Li. This liaison resulted into the birth of a daughter named Kao. Although Li was once Nikola's lover, it is quite clear that he really doesn't have any regard for her.

With Kao and an elderly Li as assistants, Nikola plotted to unleash his plague in Africa in 1939. Seeking to frustrate Nikola's plot, Doc Savage went to Africa and learned the secret reason behind his training (31). Li turned against Nikola and injected his cat with the plague. The cat (whose name was Hecate instead of Apollyon) bit Nikola, who then died horribly from his own plague.

In the letters page of another Millennium Doc Savage serial, *The Devil's Thoughts* (part 2, 1991), Mark Ellis, the editor of the Millennium series, explained how *Doom Dynasty* was supposed to fit in with Boothby's original novels. The 1896 scenes in *Doom Dynasty* was supposed to take place between *A Bid for Fortune* and *Dr. Nikola*. Why Nikola didn't stay in the Tibetan monastery of *Farewell, Nikola* is opened to conjecture. Apollyon died after *Farewell, Nikola* and was eventually replaced by Hecate.

The Hecate explanation is flawless, but I would make these following adjustments to Mr. Ellis' explanations. The 1896 scenes in *Doom Dynasty* happened between *The Lust of Hate* and *Dr. Nikola's Experiment*. The conclusion of *Farewell, Nikola* can be reconciled with *Doom Dynasty* in the following manner. Disturbed by the visions of his own death, Nikola became reluctant to perform his fifth immortality experiment on himself in the Tibetan monastery. Undergoing a medical examination before submitting to the experiment, he realized that the silphium injection by Li was actually retarding the aging process. Therefore, there was no need for the experiment and the prophecies of his death seen by himself and Claire Trevor were averted. Deciding not to share his discovery about silphium with his new Asian allies, Nikola called off the experiment without explanation. Suspecting that Nikola was holding something back, his Asian allies decided to liquidate him. Nikola fled Asia to avoid assassination. For the second time in his life, a powerful Asian society had marked him for death. The situation was even worse now because his brief alliance with his Asian partners had allowed them to gain control of his crime network. Nikola fled to the United States where he killed Colonel Savage. Eventually Li, one of the few people to remain loyal to Nikola, found him there. Although they had an affair, Nikola could not reciprocate Li's love because he had never forgotten Gertrude Trevor. Constant pursuit by his former Asian partners caused Nikola to take four decades to develop a criminal organization that again could threaten the world.

The previous discussion about *Doom Dynasty* was fun speculation on my part, but I still really believe that Nikola died in that monastery, a victim of his own search for immortality.

## NOTES

1. This also happens to be the same year that Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), the Serbian-American inventor of alternating current, was born. I have often wondered if Boothby derived the surname of his creation from the real-life Tesla. The usage of electricity in *Dr. Nikola's Experiment* may also have been based on Tesla's experiments. There is another real-life person who allegedly influenced Boothby's creation of Nikola. According to Peter Haining's "The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes" in *A Sherlock Holmes Compendium* (Castle Books, 1980), Dr. Nikola was based on Dr. McGregor Reed, who had the dubious distinction of running unsuccessfully for both the United States Senate and the British House of Commons. Unfortunately, I was unable to find any further information about Reed.

2. In *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 17), Nikola claimed that one of the most harrowing experiences of his life happened approximately six years previously. Since I place that novel in 1894, then this unrecorded exploit happened in 1888. I believe that this adventure involved Nikola's encounter with the results of another scientist's experiments. Some of Nikola's freaks could have originated from Noble's Isle, a place described by H. G. Wells in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). In January 1888, a brig bound for San Francisco picked up an Englishman, Edward Prendick, in an open boat in the Pacific. The Englishman told a wild story about strange Beast People and their creator, the late Dr. Moreau. In 1891, a British ship visited the island and found no Beast People. I suspect Nikola visited the island in 1888 and removed any living survivors of the Beast People as well as the corpses of any deceased specimens. .
3. When the details of China Pete's robbery of the Chinese stick are revealed in *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 3), no mention was made that China Pete slew the abbot. Nor was it claimed that the abbot had been elected to the ruling council of the secret society. However, a later statement by Nikola that a new member of the Three had been elected to "fill the place of the man whom China Pete killed in the Llamaserai" implied as much (chap. 4).
4. The description of Nikola's English mentor, a former Oxford don who became a criminal adventurer, would fit John Charity Spring, an adversary of George MacDonald Fraser's Sir Harry Flashman. Spring appeared in *Flash for Freedom* (1971), *Flashman and the Redskins* (1982) and *Flashman and the Angel of the Lord* (1994). Spring's activities between 1848 to 1859 are documented by Fraser. Our last known piece of information about him is that he was living in South Africa. He could have spent years in northwest China in the 1830's or early 1840's. In 1891, he would have been somewhere between eighty and ninety years old. In *Flashman and the Tiger* (1999), a former cabin boy asserted in 1894 that "Spring's long gone to his account." This statement would imply that Spring had died at least a few years prior to 1894. The theoretical identification of Spring as Nikola's mentor is tentative because any future Flashman novel could easily provide evidence that contradicts my hypothesis.
5. This reconstructed Chilean episode contains much conjecture on my part, but the execution of Nikola's English mentor by Balmaceda's forces (*Dr. Nikola*, chap. 1), the participation of Nikola's stepbrother in the Chilean Civil War (*Farewell, Nikola*, chap. 7), Baxter's mission to Valparaiso (*A Bid For Fortune*, part 1, prologue), and Nikola's sudden trip to South America during his persecution of Wetherell (*Ibid.*, part 2, chap. 5) are all mentioned in the series.
6. Although Wetherell may have been ignored by Nikola for a short period, his mental stability was also unhinged by the death of his wife from natural causes. References in *A Bid For Fortune* indicate that her death transpired shortly before the novel began, but there is a somewhat contradictory passage, which suggests that her demise transpired years earlier. Wetherell mentioned that his cook had been with him "since before my wife's death—that is to say nearly ten years" (part 2, chap.4). This comment implies that Wetherell's wife died almost a decade earlier. I surmise that Wetherell intended to say that the cook had been in his employ before his wife's recent death, and that this servant's loyalty had been proven in almost a decade of service.
7. Dr. Nikola's methods in *A Bid for Fortune* were studied scrupulously and even copied by two great criminal masterminds. In H. C. "Sapper" McNeile's *Bulldog Drummond* (1920), Carl Peterson organized a hotel meeting with

fellow conspirators in a manner very similar to Nikola's. In Sax Rohmer's *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), a certain notorious mandarin gave priceless wedding gifts to newlyweds who had been his adversaries.

8. Benwell, a minor character in *Dr. Nikola*, also made a brief appearance in Boothby's *The Beautiful White Devil* (1896). The title character is Alie Dunbar, a female pirate who operated as a sort of Robin Hood of the Pacific. A reference to "Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>" (chap. 14) places the events of this novel in 1890-91.
9. Inside the monastery, the Three employed at least thirty Asian dwarves as servants. These dwarves could be members of the Tcho-Tcho people, a pygmy race that resides in Tibet and Burma. The Burmese branch of the Tcho-Tcho people is described in "The Lair of the Star-Spawn" by August Derleth and Mark Schorer. The Tcho-Tcho people normally worship the Great Old Ones, a group of malign cosmic entities. The lamas of the secret society, who seemed to be Buddhists, do not share the religious beliefs of the Tcho-Tcho people. The society controlled by the Three must have gone to war against the cult of the Great Old Ones in Tibet, and enslaved several members of the Tcho-Tcho race as a result of this conflict.
10. Quong Ma is not to be confused with Ah-Win, Nikola's mute servant whose left ear was totally severed.
11. Quong Ma's assassination attempts at various places during this three-month period are reconstructed from references in *Dr. Nikola* (chap. 17) and *Dr. Nikola's Experiment* (chap. 5).
12. After meeting Nikola in London, Bertrand began to receive letters from an unnamed European secret society (probably the Black Hand of Sicily or the Camorra of Naples). Nikola offered to remove this threat for a sizable fee. It is logical to assume that Nikola was writing the letters to Bertrand and pretending that these messages were the work of the secret society. Nikola may have been imitating a deception developed by a criminal contemporary. In "The Narrative of Mr. James Rigby" (<http://www.mtroyal.ab.ca/programs/arts/english/gaslight/>) from Arthur Morrison's *The Dorrington Deed-Box* (1897), London detective Horace Dorrington was hired by an Australian, James Rigby, to protect him from the vengeance of the Camorra. Actually Dorrington was persecuting Rigby and making this harassment look like the work of the Camorra. Internal evidence in Morrison's story suggests that its events happened in 1894.
13. Nikola probably conceived his hansom idea through his study of a famous murder case that happened in Melbourne, Australia, on Saturday, July 28, 1883. This murder, described in Fergus Hume's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886) (<http://www.mtroyal.ab.ca/gaslight/ferghume.htm>), involved the victim being given a chloroform overdose and then placed in a hansom cab.
14. France and Russia had formed an alliance in 1892, and both were hostile to Britain as well as to Germany. The possibility of a British-German alliance was prevented by the Kaiser's opposition to British naval power and colonial expansion (particularly in regard to the Boers of South Africa). The Franco-Russian alliance was also hostile to Italy, which had formed the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1882. Nikola could have sold his formula to either the Franco-Russian Alliance or the Triple Alliance. Being an Italian with a fondness for the land of his ancestors, the sinister savant would only have chosen a member of the Triple Alliance. Neither Italy nor Austria-Hungary had the resources to exploit the military potential of Nikola's gas, so Germany was the logical choice. During 1904-7, Britain settled its differences with France and Russia to oppose German aims in Europe. In World War I,

- Italy refused to honor its alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary and fought against them as an ally of Britain, France and Russia.
15. An opponent of Hercule Poirot during the 1930's would employ a somewhat similar logic in a very famous mystery by Agatha Christie.
  16. A similar silence fell on the name of the late Professor Moriarty when his subordinates were put on trial in 1891 (see Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Final Problem").
  17. By "Lecocq," Boothby meant Lecoq, the detective who appeared in mysteries by Emile Gaboriau, of which the most notable was *Monsieur Lecoq* (1869).
  18. In *A Prince of Swindlers*, the Earl indicated that he met Carne "during his "last year" as Viceroy of India. In order to reconcile Boothby's stories with the chronology of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, it would have to be argued that the Earl only occupied this position for a few months.
  19. Although "The Adventure of the Empty House" was set in 1894, it was published in 1903. When *A Prince of Swindlers* was serialized in *Pearson's Magazine* during 1897, the reading public assumed Holmes to have been irretrievably killed off by his creator. Boothby probably intended the stories in *A Prince of Swindlers* to be set during Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897. A reference to "a joyous and auspicious occasion" in the preface of the book clearly implied the year of 1897. However, another reference in the preface to November 7 falling on a Saturday shortly after Carne's flight from London pointed to 1896 being the year. I am ignoring both these references, and using the statement about "the late lamented Sherlock Holmes" to justify 1894 as the year of Carne's crimes.
  20. Holmes had to travel incognito around the world to avoid assassination attempts from the remnants of the Moriarty organization. The exact extent of the Moriarty organization becomes apparent by a careful examination of Guy Boothby's *In Strange Company* (1894). This novel is linked to the Dr. Nikola series by the fact that one of its minor characters, Count de Panuroff of Thursday Island, was briefly mentioned by Richard Hatteras in *A Bid for Fortune* (part 1, chap. 4). *In Strange Company* concerns the crimes of John Macklin, an English albino dwarf, during the summer of 1891 though the spring of 1893. Shortly before the novel began, Macklin gained control of the Society, "whose object is the amassing of money, by fair means or foul, and which is perhaps the most powerful organization of its kind in the whole wide world" (part 1, chap. 1). The Society had agents stationed in ports throughout the world. The Society's primary purpose was to track down European embezzlers, who were hiding in foreign countries. Once the embezzlers were located, the Society robbed them of their ill-gotten gains. The Society was almost certainly the overseas branch of Professor Moriarty's crime syndicate. The existence of the Society would explain Moriarty's statement to Holmes in "The Final Problem": "You stand in the way not merely of an individual, but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realize." When Holmes caused the death of Moriarty and the arrest of nearly all his London operatives in the spring of 1891, Macklin saw the opportunity to seize dominion over the overseas operations of the crime syndicate. Although Colonel Moran, Moriarty's chief of staff, was reduced to card cheating in London. Macklin commanded a profitable organization. There can be little doubt that Macklin's global operatives were ordered to be on the lookout for Sherlock Holmes. With the exception of an inconvenient outstanding murder warrant in London, Macklin was triumphant at the conclusion of *In Strange Company*. 200,000 pounds richer, he fled Britain with his organization intact. Having only read approximately fifteen of Boothby's more than fifty novels, I

don't know whether Macklin ever returned in another book, or was abandoned by the author in favor of the more popular Nikola. If Macklin ever crossed Nikola's path, the diabolical doctor would have seen a golden opportunity to add another albino dwarf to his collection of freaks.

21. Nikola could have learned all the details of the Matabele insurgency from the secret architect of the rebellion, Professor Sebastian. The activities of this amoral scientist were described in Grant Allen's *Hilda Wade* (1899) (<http://www.canadiana.org/cgi-bin/ECO/mtg?doc=26393>). Like Nikola, Sebastian possessed a ruthless disregard for human life in the pursuit of scientific research. Since he was an expert on anesthetics, Sebastian may also have been consulted by Nikola on the modification of the Tibetan anesthetic into a poison gas.
22. I believe this monastery to be place known as Rache Churan, where high officials of the Si-Fan were trained. The Si-Fan, a secret society described in novels by Sax Rohmer and Cay Van Ash, was the secret order to which Nikola's allies must have belonged. Historically governed by a Council of Seven, the Si-Fan had been greatly weakened due to its centuries-old conflict with the Three. One of the members of the largely depleted Si-Fan was the governor of Honan, a Chinese province. He secretly created underground factories in Honan. At one of these factories, the poison gas must have been manufactured. With the destruction of the Three, the surviving members of the Si-Fan, including the powerful governor of Honan, helped to cause the Boxer rebellion in 1900. With the failure of the Boxer Rebellion, the governor was dismissed from office. Assuming the alias of Fu Manchu, the former governor arranged a meeting in Sinkiang among tong leaders and representatives of various Asian cults. This meeting led to the re-birth of the Si-Fan as a powerful confederation of crime. The important clue to the usurpation of the Three's domination over the tongs by the Si-Fan lies in Rohmer's *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913). In *Dr. Nikola*, it was asserted that the Three directed the Triad societies. In Rohmer's book (chap. 10), it is implied that Fu Manchu controlled the Canton Triad Society. In the same book, Fu Manchu attempted to murder Sir Lionel Barton with a poison gas. This gas was derived by mixing chlorine with ingredients from the Tibetan anesthetic purloined by Nikola.
23. The supposed background of Nikola's stepbrother is very similar to that of Don Juan Murillo, the absconding dictator of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge." This Sherlock Holmes story was first published in 1908. I dismissed the possibility that Murillo could be the same person as Nikola's stepbrother because of certain chronological reasons that are too complex to state here. There was also an emphasis on Haitian Voodoo in Doyle's story that suggested a totally different origin for Murillo. In Arthur Morrison's *The Red Triangle* (1903), detective Martin Hewitt battled Mayes, an English master criminal who had once been the *de facto* ruler of Haiti. In a Sherlockian article, "The Tiger of Haiti" (*Wheelwritings* #24, January 1986), I theorized that Mayes and Murillo were the same man.
24. If Nikola did indeed die in the monastery, then his secrets and resources would have fallen into the hands of the Si-Fan (see note 22). Among Nikola's legacy to the Si-Fan would be his global criminal network, his poison gas, his collection of freaks and the book containing the secret of a thousand-year lifespan. Learning from Nikola's failures, Fu Manchu would have viewed the Three's longevity process as too dangerous and abandoned it. Fu Manchu's own successful discovery of a longevity process involved a totally different source, an elixir extracted from Burmese orchids.

25. Dr. Nikola did appear in a genuine "alternate history" novel, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* (1992), in which Dracula gained control of Britain.
26. In *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life* (1973), Mr. Farmer asserted the Doc's father was the character called James Wilder in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Priory School." Win Scott Eckert's *The Doc Savage Chronology* (<http://members.aol.com/yingko9/Savage.htm>) reconciles the Wilder theory to *Doom Dynasty*. My own *The Complete Chronology of Bronze* (1999), a book on CD-Rom available from Paul McCall (<http://www.paulmccall.com/aces.html>), rules out the events of *Doom Dynasty*, and comes up with a different explanation to reconcile the Wilder theory with the reference in *No Light to Die By*.
27. Colonel Richard Henry Savage (1846-1903) was a real-life engineer and author. Henry Ralston, the business manager of the Street and Smith publishing firm, had known Savage. When a new pulp hero series was under consideration by Street and Smith, Ralston named the hero Savage after the late Colonel. For details of the real-life inspiration for Doc Savage series, see Will Murray's "The Forgotten Doc Savage," first published in *Secrets of Doc Savage* (Odyssey Publications, 1981). A revised version of this article, including new information about Colonel Savage's tragic death, was printed in the first part of *Doom Dynasty*.
28. Although Guy Boothby never had Nikola create a plague, the villain of Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) did conceive such a scheme of mass murder.
29. The herb is from Lester Dent's Doc Savage novel, *Fear Cay* (September 1934).
30. In reality, Richard Henry Savage was killed when a carriage ran over him on October 3, 1903. The date of November 12, 1901, was given as Doc Savage's date of birth in Philip Jose Farmer's biography of the pulp hero. This theory about this November date has come under criticism by Doc Savage fans recently due to critical examination of Lester Dent's *Peril in the North* (December 1941), the only novel in which Doc's birthday is celebrated. The strongest argument for assigning a different birthday to Doc Savage appeared in Jeff Deischer's "That Stormy Night" (*The Bronze Gazette* #30, June 29, 2000).
31. The premise of Doc Savage's learning about the reason for his unique training in 1939 is inconsistent with hints in the pulp series. In at least eight of Lester Dent's Doc Savage novels written and set during World War II, Doc was unaware of the reason for his training. In *The Complete Chronology of Bronze*, I argued that Doc learned the reason during a trip to London in 1945.