



A Bid for Fortune

Guy Boothby

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Australian novelist and writer, noted for sensational fiction in variety magazines around the turn of the nineteenth century. Boothby was born in Adelaide, son of Thomas Wilde Boothby, who for a time was a member of the South Australian Legislative Assembly. Guy Boothby's grandfather was Benjamin Boothby (1803–1868), judge of the supreme court of South Australia from 1853 to 1867. When Boothby was six he travelled to England with his mother, but returned to his native country at the age of 16, in 1883.

In 1890, aged 23, Boothby wrote the libretto for a comic opera, *Sylvia*, which was published and produced at Adelaide in December 1890, and in 1891 appeared *The Jonquil: an Opera*. The music in each case was written by Cecil James Sharp. While writing his second comic opera he was private secretary to the mayor of Adelaide, Lewis Cohen.

There was little opportunity for Boothby to progress in the Adelaide Corporation: thus, with the support of Cohen, Boothby moved to Brisbane in Queensland where he believed that he would find "a wider opening for his talents". Perhaps wanting to get to know the country of his birth better, he went on a trek across the continent from North to South with his brother.

In 1894 he left Brisbane to travel to London. where he published *On the Wallaby or Through the East and Across Australia* (1894), an account of the travels of himself and his brother. In the same year his first novel, *In Strange Company*, was published and was quickly successful. He wrote over 50 books over the course of a decade. He is best known for such works as the *Dr Nikola* series, about an occultist criminal mastermind who is a Victorian forerunner to *Fu Manchu*, and *Pharos, the Egyptian*. Rudyard Kipling was his friend and mentor, and his books were remembered with affection by George Orwell.

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