



Newspaper Photo 1913

Oaksey

The Notorious Inez Broom

Inez Harriette Morton Elena Broom was born in February 1873 at Wargrave, Berkshire to George and Evelyn Margaret Broom.

During the period from about 1895 to the date of her first marriage, in 1898, to the Hon Rupert Cecil Craven, she lived at Flintham House in Oaksey. This was the location of the activities, which led to her being cited as the co-respondent in the Chandos-Pole divorce case in June 1899.

Her character and life are outlined in the following extract from the book about her second husband, Talbot Mundy.

'Talbot Mundy, Philosopher of Adventure: A Critical Biography', by Brian Traves

[In Kenya] Talbot Mundy had been guiding a number of hunting expeditions & on one of these made the acquaintance of the rambunctious & quarrelsome Rupert Cecil Craven & his party. His wife, 35 year old Inez Broom, was regarded as one of the most beautiful women of her day, attributed to her Spanish grandmother. She had once been named as co-respondent in the notorious Chandos-Pole divorce of 1899, when her unchaperoned life made her a centrepiece of English gossip. She had left home at 19 & became known as a daring cross-country rider who smoked & drank brandy; she described herself as a respectable but unconventional sort of person. Inez & Rupert had been married in Apr 1898 & the Cravens naturally used their family influence to vindicate Inez in Court – unsuccessfully. Ten years later when Inez met Talbot Mundy, the Craven's marriage was crumbling; in the subsequent divorce suit, Rupert Craven would have to admit he was as guilty of adultery as was his wife. Inez left her husband at the beginning of 1908 & moved in with Talbot, as both were receiving their respective divorces. Inez went to London to finalise her divorce, then returned to Talbot in Africa. Shortly afterwards, the man born William Lancaster Gribbon adopted a new name for the final time, Talbot Chetwynd Miller Mundy & asserted he was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Shrewsbury.

Inez & Talbot married in a town near Mombasa at the end of the year & by then the repercussions of the scandal had cost him his job. After he recovered from a near fatal bout with blackwater fever, the couple decided to leave Africa for Europe & London. Ashamed of the embarrassment her eldest son had caused the family, Talbot's mother, who died four years later, eliminated him from her will after a final gift of a portion of her husband's estate. The money given by the family was quickly spent, since Inez was accustomed to a considerably higher standard of living than Talbot could provide, & his prospects were not favourable. Friends & relatives turned their backs on the couple & Talbot's efforts

to resume his career as a newspaper correspondent were fruitless. His wife's drinking was becoming a matter of growing concern. Active in the women's suffrage movement, on one march she took an axe & smashed the windows of a newspaper office where Talbot held a menial position. With the future bleak, the couple gathered the last of their resources & headed for America aboard the White Star liner Teutonic.

Disembarking in New York City on 30 Sep 1909, the Mundys had their remaining funds, a British £100 note, turned into American currency, about \$500. Without friends or knowledge of the city, Mundy started to walk, & having a vague recommendation in mind, happened to head south into the perilous district near the East River. He found a kitchen & bedroom in a tenement three flights back at 503 East 15th St & word spread in the neighbourhood that 'green' Englishman & his wife were worth the risk of robbing.

Talbot was later found lying unconscious in the vicinity of East 19th St. He was bleeding, with a fractured skull & a broken jaw & his pockets were empty with money & watch gone. He was taken to a public ward at Bellevue Hospital, with a death certificate already signed.

At the tenement, police & reporters were surprised to find a woman unexpectedly beautiful & cultured & the Chandos-Pole case had not been forgotten. 'Former Mrs Craven in Poverty Here' noted the New York Times, 'Assault on Her Husband Reveals the Plight of the Once Noted English Beauty.' Reporters next found her in a dingy 1st Ave saloon, smoking cigarettes & drinking brandy & seltzer, dressed in clothes that badly needed mending, saying 'with a sudden incoherent gust of earnestness, 'But don't you say anything about Rupert – I love him – I love him as deeply as ever.'

Talbot later recovered but had to re-enter hospital to have two infected fingers amputated & - as they continued to fall on hard times – they sought relief from the St George's Society of New York as indigent natives of England. This brought them to the attention of a Cunliffe Owen, an officer of the Society, who considered they had falsely presented their previous personal histories & antecedents. They were arrested, taken to Ellis Island & imprisoned until 10 Mar when the Dept of Commerce & Labour found they had no case to answer.

Inez & Talbot had already been on the verge of separating when they headed for New York & by Feb 1912 divorce papers were filed with a final judgement on 14 Oct. By then Inez was a well known New York suffragette whose drinking interrupted several marches. By early 1913 she was admitted to Bellevue, suffering from alcoholic hallucinations. Mundy scarcely saw Inez again, but she lived for another quarter century &, still paying alimony, he always simply referred to her as 'Craven'.