

# Hira Singh: "But he spoke English better than I, he having mastered it, whereas I was only born to its careless use."

Talbot Mundy

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Talbot Mundy was born William Lancaster Gribbon on April 23rd 1879 in London. After a particularly undistinguished record at Rugby School, he ran off to Germany and joined a circus. After his return, from Germany, he left Britain to work as a relief worker in Baroda in India, followed by further adventures in Africa, the Near East and the Far East. His initial inclination was to be a con artist, a confidence trickster and exploit other areas of petty criminality. However with a change of location to the United States and a near fatal mugging he decided that life as an upright citizen was now more to his liking. At age 29 he had decided on Talbot Mundy as a name and three years later in 1911 he began his writing career. Obviously late but it was still to be prodigious none the less. Many of his novels including his first 'Rung Ho!' and his most famous 'King - Of the Khyber Rifles are set during the British Raj in India. In early 1922, Mundy moved to San Diego, California and in late 1923 began writing perhaps his finest novel, Om, the Secret of Ahbor Valley. Whilst much of Talbot's early life was used in his work it seems he was not particularly proud to return to these places or indeed say to much more about his earlier escapades. Although his writing was to prove very popular over the years and has been revived on many occasions since his death it is fair to say that both his writing and his life were colourful. He married a number of times and still believed that his business dealings would make him very rich. However much of his life would not go as planned and it took several marriages in the hope of finding true happiness. His sixth wife, Dawn, gave birth to a girl on 26 February 1933 shortly after their return to England. Unfortunately the child died shortly after birth. Thereafter he wrote little but much of his work was republished and his name kept in print. On 5 August 1940 Talbot Mundy died from complications associated with diabetes.



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