

A WOMAN-MAN.

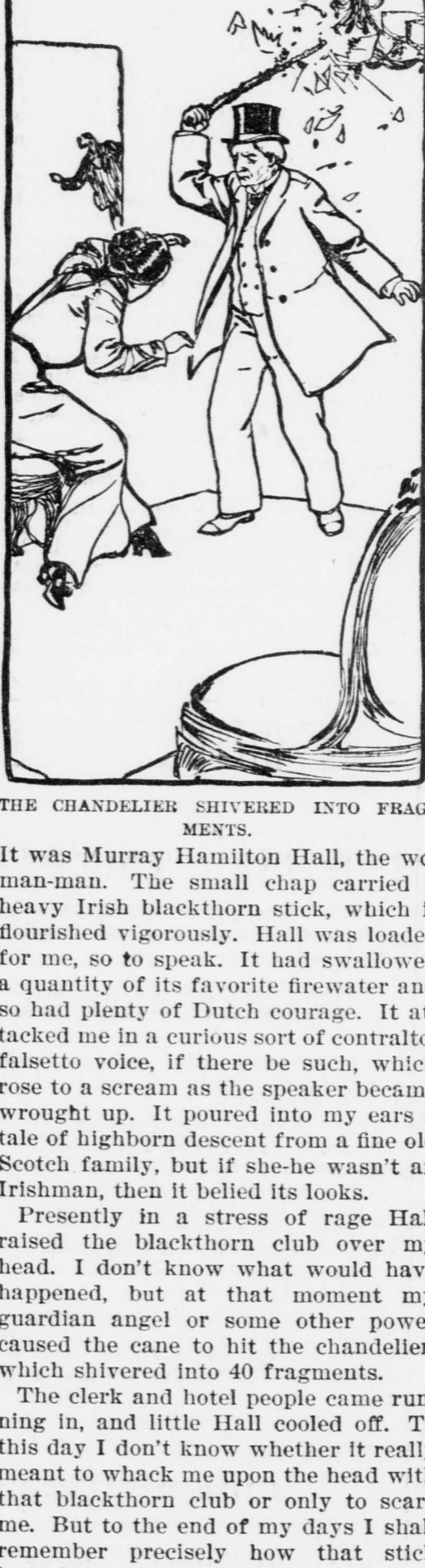
How Murray Hall, the Woman Who Posed as a Man, Drew a Club on a Lady Interviewer.

The extraordinary career of Murray Hamilton Hall, who for 30 years successfully masqueraded as a man in New York city, deceiving even the very elect among the politicians who were her familiar associates, recalls to me one of the singular episodes in the life of a newspaper woman.

When a woman goes to a great city and tries for journalistic work, she must take what she can get, and she does not always get it, either.

One of my first assignments in New York was a commission to investigate city employment agencies and discover whether they were not engaged in unlawful and immoral business, as some of them were. For many years the so called Hamilton Hall had kept an employment agency on Sixth avenue. I visited it several times. It was run squarely enough, so far as the object of my investigations was concerned. I said so in my newspaper report. I also, however, made comment which offended the little woman-man—called him, her or it “a tiny man with a squeaky voice,” or something like that. This hurt the little creature’s vanity. It was only 4 feet 7 inches tall, which makes the deception it practiced still more extraordinary.

The small person was vindictive. It had me followed and so found out where I lived. I shall say “it” for convenience, because the he-she pronoun is confusing and tends to give one a headache. One evening after dinner there was a caller for me at my hotel.



THE CHANDELIER SHIVERED INTO FRAGMENTS.

It was Murray Hamilton Hall, the woman-man. The small chap carried a heavy Irish blackthorn stick, which it flourished vigorously. Hall was loaded for me, so to speak. It had swallowed a quantity of its favorite firewater and so had plenty of Dutch courage. It attacked me in a curious sort of contralto-falsetto voice, if there be such, which rose to a scream as the speaker became wrought up. It poured into my ears a tale of highborn descent from a fine old Scotch family, but if she-he wasn't an Irishman, then it belied its looks.

Presently in a stress of rage Hall raised the blackthorn club over my head. I don't know what would have happened, but at that moment my guardian angel or some other power caused the cane to hit the chandelier, which shivered into 40 fragments.

The clerk and hotel people came running in, and little Hall cooled off. To this day I don't know whether it really meant to whack me upon the head with that blackthorn club or only to scare me. But to the end of my days I shall remember precisely how that stick looked, every grim black knot of it, as it struck the gas globes.

"I'm able to pay for it," squeaked little Hall grandiloquently. "Send me the bill tomorrow. Here is my card."

Then she-he arose with a flourish of the blackthorn club and a dramatic movement and staid not upon the order of its going, but got out at once.

The incident remained in my mind vividly. With it there remained an indelible impression that somehow the little creature was masquerading. I seemed to know that intuitively, but how or why I could not make out. I was certain the name of Murray Hamilton Hall was an assumed one, but the real one neither I nor another ever found out. Here was at least one woman who could keep a secret.

Undoubtedly there were hundreds, if not thousands, in New York who in their hearts mourned in connection with the death of little Hall. They were the members of the political clubs whom she-he had deluded for a generation, had eaten and drunk with, played poker and gone fishing with, had taken its tall, handsome wife to their clambake parties and boasted of its political pull over them all. Of this mysterious and powerful "pull" Hall bragged to me, I remember, telling me what it could do then and there if it chose. At any rate, here was one woman who had the satisfaction of voting for half a score of presidents. How she must have roared to herself with laughter when she thought of this stupendous joke.

Noteworthy is the remark of a woman who lived in a part of the same house with Hall and had been deceived like the rest. When at its death the little woman-man's sex was discovered, she exclaimed indignantly:

"If I had known Hall was a woman, I'd have moved out."

MISS WIDEAWAKE.