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The New Chief of Police

A Dramatic Exposure
of Modern Hypocrisy

BY

WALTER MONTAGUE

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This playlet was first introduced at the Hippodrome Theater, Los Angeles, Cal., the week of May 4th, 1914, and created a sensation. It is a virile gripping story of social conditions as they exist today. Published exclusively by The Monith Publishing Company, 341 South Los Angeles Street, Los Angeles, Cal.

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To the Public

The Publishers feel that no apology is needed in presenting this playlet to the public. We hold no brief for either side of the question, but merely place it before you, as a point of View to accept or condemn as you choose. In order to meet the demand of thousands of people who had no opportunity to see the playlet, we have secured the publishing rights from the Author, Walter Montague, and offer it to you word for word as it was played under his direction.

THE PUBLISHERS.

Respectfully Dedicated To

the host of good fellows, of both sexes, who, while believing in majority rule, feel that the minority have certain definite rights, and who regret the lack of intelligence in these pseudo reformers—who will not admit a middle ground—but must **rule or ruin.**

WALTER MONTAGUE.

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WALTER MONTAGUE,
209 Pantages Theater Building,
San Francisco, Cal.

MC:45746 279

The New Chief of Police

A Story Taken From Life

BY

WALTER MONTAGUE

SCENE

An office of a chief of police. A desk C. with a swivel chair. There is an entrance R. and L. U. The room to be fitted up as an office. There is a chair down R.

CAST

Chief Saunders	Newly Appointed
Dora La Fere.....	A Society Bud
Joe Masters.....	A Sailor
Mrs. De Witt Beecher.....	
.....	President Women's Federated Clubs

CHIEF

(Discovered sitting at his desk C. He is in full uniform. The telephone bell rings at rise. He answers it.)

Hello. *(Pause.)*

Who? Mrs. De Witt—Beecher—president of the Women's Federated Clubs.

All right—send her up.

(He hooks up the phone and retakes it off hook.)

Hello, Sergeant. This is the Chief. Get that sailor out of the Bullpen, and have him sent up when I ring for him.

(Hangs up phone.)

MRS. BEECHER

(Enters R. U. E. A mature society woman, who is elegantly dressed, uses a lorgnette.) Good morning, Chief Saunders.

CHIEF

Good morning, Mrs. De Witt—Beecher—won't you be seated? *(Waving her to a seat R.)*

MRS. BEECHER

(Who sits)

Thank you. I have called in my official capacity as President of the Women's Federated Clubs, to discuss the latest outrage on one of our young girls.

CHIEF

Yes—the man has been arrested.

MRS. BEECHER

You are, of course, aware that the women of this city are largely responsible for the election of the Mayor, who appointed you Chief of Police—with our approval—and are taking an active interest in the enforcement of the law.

CHIEF

Yes, the women of this city are very active in politics.

MRS. BEECHER

We have noticed, with a great deal of alarm, that since we have closed the redlight district, that respectable women and girls are being insulted on the street, almost hourly, and we demand that immediate steps be taken to suppress it.

CHIEF

By whom?

MRS. BEECHER

By the Police Department—of course.

CHIEF

May the department rely upon the co-operation of the Women's Federated Clubs?

MRS. BEECHER

Most certainly—why do you ask?

CHIEF

Because heretofore the women of this city have failed to give us any real help, they have dealt only with effects—not cause.

MRS. BEECHER

Why, Chief—how dare you make such a statement?

We women have ought *vice* for four years; we have closed every disreputable house in this city—we have driven those unspeakable women—(*Pause?*)

CHIEF

Yes—you have driven these unspeakable women—but where have you driven them? (*Pause.*)

Pray don't hesitate—my dear Mrs. De Witt Beecher; where have you driven them? (*Pause.*)

You have driven them from the restricted district all over the city.

MRS. BEECHER

We have closed the brothels—it is for the police to see that they don't open again. A seaport with a population of 350,000 without a redlight district—is a record.

CHIEF

Yes, a record of inefficiency, and a monument to ignorance.

MRS. BEECHER

(*Rises indignantly.*) Chief Saunders!

CHIEF

Yes—crass ignorance. Since you have been given the vote, you have taken upon yourself the settlement of problems you do not understand. You have fought vice—yes; in and out of season you have clamored for its suppression; but through ignorance—wilful or otherwise—you have never raised a finger to remove the cause.

MRS. BEECHER

That is not a fact.

CHIEF

Pardon me—I state a truth. Not only have you good women contributed to a low state of morals—but you refuse to aid the victims.

MRS. BEECHER

I protest. In the name of the womanhood of this State—I protest.

CHIEF

I will show you what I mean, in the case you have come to see me about. I will prove to you that the women in this city—the good women—the mothers of grown-up daughters—are partly responsible for the conditions they complain of.

MRS. BEECHER

How dare you make such a statement? It is a reflection upon the modesty of this young woman who was so grossly insulted.

CHIEF

I mean it to be.

MRS. BEECHER

She comes from one of our best families—her character is above reproach.

CHIEF

Granted—but this sailor did not know that.

MRS. BEECHER

She was dressed in the height of fashion—couldn't he tell from her appearance that she was a lady?

CHIEF

No.

MRS. BEECHER

(*Horrifed.*) Chief Saunders!

CHIEF

It is true. This man has been in every port in the world. His acquaintance with women has been restricted to a certain class; he has no other means of judging a woman, except from her appearance; and had this young woman, whose character you claim to be above reproach, not suggested a woman of the Underworld, she would never have been insulted.

MRS. BEECHER

You forget yourself, Chief Saunders. You are insulting the womanhood of this city. I will not listen to any more. (*Starts to exit.*)

CHIEF

(*Stops her.*) You must stay, Madam. You cannot escape your responsibilities.

MRS. BEECHER

Would you detain me here by force?

CHIEF

If necessary—yes.

MRS. BEECHER

(*Resumes her seat.*) You will hear of this later—Chief Saunders.

CHIEF

I am responsible for my actions, Madam.

(*In phone.*) Sergeant—send up that sailor. (*Hangs up.*)

MRS. BEECHER

(*Rises.*) I will not remain in the same room with that beast.

CHIEF

(*Sarcastically.*) Have no fear, Madam; he will be as uncomfortable in your society as you are in his.

(*The sailor enters L. U. E. with his hat in his hand. Mrs. Beecher examines him through her glasses.*)

What is your name?

JOE

Joe Masters.

CHIEF

What is your occupation?

JOE

Sailor—able seaman. I'm just back from a whaling cruise.

CHIEF

Married or single?

JOE

Single.

CHIEF

When did you arrive in this port?

JOE

A week ago.

CHIEF

How long were you at sea?

JOE

Eight months.

CHIEF

And during that eight months you remained aboard your ship?

JOE

Except when we camped in the ice fields.

CHIEF

When you came ashore here, where did you make for?

JOE

I started for the dance halls.

CHIEF

Why did you start for the dance halls?

JOE

That's the only place a sailor can have any fun.

CHIEF

Didn't you know that the Y. M. C. A. had a reading room for sailors?

JOE

Yes—but men who go to the Arctic huntin' finns ain't that kind of a sailor.

(Pause. Chief looks at Mrs. Beecher.)

A man home from an eight months cruise on the ice wants company. Why, for over six months I didn't see a white woman. I wanted to get into a crowd—I wanted to be free and easy, and feel I was welcome.

CHIEF

Go on.

JOE

Well, when I went down the line—I found all the dance halls closed up; no light—no dancing—no women; and nothing to drink but grape juice.

CHIEF

Go on.

JOE

I asked a cop what had struck the town, and where a man could go to have a good time, and he said there was no place in town for a bum like me—that if I wanted to have any fun, I'd have to wear a claw hammer—join a swell club, and stop at a swell hotel.

CHIEF

Go on.

JOE

I thought he was kiddin' me at first, until he said that a bunch of fool women were trying to make a Sunday school out of a seaport.

(Mrs. Beecher sniffs.)

Then I asked him where—where——

(Looks at Mrs. Beecher and stops.)

CHIEF

Then you asked him where the redlight district was?

JOE

Yes.

CHIEF

And what did he say?

JOE

He said it had spread all over the city.

CHIEF

What did you do then?

JOE

I started up-town, and—and——

CHIEF

Go on.

JOE

I was crazy for someone to talk to, and when I saw a girl comin' down the street that looked like a dance-hall girl—I stopped her.

MRS. BEECHER

(Rises indignantly.) A dance-hall girl—this is an outrage.

CHIEF

This is the truth, Madam. *(To Joe.)* What made you think she was a dance-hall girl?

JOE

By the look of her. She didn't have much on, and what little she had fitted her like a wet bathing suit. Her face was painted—and you could see her leg up to the knee.

CHIEF

And you didn't think you were going wrong in speaking to her?

JOE

No, sir. I thought she dressed that way to let men know she was a sporting woman.

CHIEF

What did you say to her?

JOE

Hello, Kiddo.

CHIEF

Would you have spoken to her if you had thought she was a respectable woman?

JOE

No, sir.

CHIEF

And why not?

JOE

Because—well, because I got a mother and two sisters. But they don't dress like she did.

CHIEF

That will do. Step into the next room.

JOE

(*Going up to door L. U. E.*)

(*At door.*) Say, Chief, I ain't the kind of man to insult a good woman, nor I don't want you to think I'm doin' the baby act. If I done wrong, I'll take what's comin' to me; but if that girl had looked the lady, I would have treated her as such. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

CHIEF

In that man's statement lies the root of the trouble.

MRS. BEECHER

(*Incredulously.*) Do you believe him?

CHIEF

Yes, my experience as a policeman has taught me that a modest woman has less to fear from a rough neck than from some of the young gentlemen about town.

MRS. BEECHER

But this girl gave him absolutely no encouragement to address her. We know her—she is a lady—and demand that an example be made of this man.

CHIEF

He should be punished, Madam; but what of the girl? (*As she starts to interrupt.*) I have made a personal investigation of this case, Madam, and know the facts.

MRS. BEECHER

With what result?

CHIEF

You shall see. (*In phone.*) Sergeant—send in Miss La Fere.

MRS. BEECHER

Is she here?

CHIEF

Yes, I have requested her to wear the costume she had on when this man insulted her.

MRS. BEECHER

You surely do not intend to question her on such a delicate subject?

CHIEF

I am going to question her about her costume and her habits; if both are above reproach, her sensibilities will not be outraged.

DORA

(*Enters with affected timidity L. U. E. She stops, sees Mrs. Beecher, runs to her R. gushingly.*) Oh, Mrs. De Witt—Beecher, isn't this dreadful?

MRS. BEECHER

(*Embracing her.*) There—there, dear, we women must make sacrifices for the good cause. The best people of the city are with you, and believe in you.

DORA

I was never so mortified in my life. (*Crying on her shoulder.*) Just fancy being in a police station!

MRS. BEECHER

There—there, dear, control yourself. The Chief of Police wishes to ask you a few questions.

DORA

(*Impulsively to the Chief.*) Oh, Chief Saunders, isn't it dreadful that a lady cannot go down the street without being insulted?

CHIEF

(*With a very cold manner.*) Where did you spend most of your time yesterday afternoon?

DORA

At the St. Pancras Hotel.

CHIEF

Do you live there?

DORA

Oh, no—I live at home.

CHIEF

Did you go to the hotel alone?

DORA

Yes.

CHIEF

To see who?

DORA

Mrs. Alleton gave a bridge party.

CHIEF

Did you play bridge for money?

DORA

Of course.

CHIEF

Then, according to the laws of this city, it is my duty to arrest you as a common gambler.

MRS. BEECHER

But, Chief Saunders, Mrs. Alleton is a leader of society; in fact, all the ladies who play bridge are prominent society women.

CHIEF

Then, I am to understand that the law against gambling doesn't apply to society women?

MRS. BEECHER

Oh, not that exactly. Bridge is a society woman's recreation.

CHIEF

Really—we will let that pass for the moment. (*To Dora.*) Were any refreshments served?

DORA

(*Confused.*) Why—er—certainly.

CHIEF

What did they consist of?

DORA

(*Confused.*) Why—er—the usual thing.

CHIEF

Miss La Fere, I want the truth. What did those refreshments consist of?

DORA

(*Hesitatingly.*) Well—cocktails, and high balls.

CHIEF

And how many cocktails and high balls did you drink?

DORA

Well, really, Chief——

CHIEF

Answer me.

DORA

Oh, not many—four, possibly five.

CHIEF

Did you feel the effect of what you drank?

DORA

Oh, dear, no.

MRS. BEECHER

Chief Saunders—those were ladies, and they hold their—er—refreshments like ladies.

CHIEF

It does not alter the fact that this girl had been drinking.

DORA

Why—the idea!

CHIEF

Did any of the ladies smoke cigarettes?

DORA

Why, Chief Saunders!

CHIEF

Answer me.

DORA

Yes. But it is the fashion now—the first women in the country smoke cigarettes.

CHIEF

So do sporting women. However, we will let that pass. Yet, according to your own statement, on the afternoon in question you gambled, drank whiskey and smoked cigarettes.

DORA

Why, Chief Saunders—how crudely you express it.

CHIEF

But you must remember I am not a society man—I am only a policeman. Who chooses your gowns, Miss La Fere?

DORA

I do, of course.

CHIEF

And you gave orders that it was to be made skin-tight?

DORA

Certainly—it is the fashion.

CHIEF

Does your mother approve of the way you dress?

DORA

Certainly.

CHIEF

Do you think you dress as a modest, refined woman should dress?

DORA

Certainly.

CHIEF

Well, you don't. There isn't a line of your figure that isn't in plain view; there isn't anything left to the imagination; your whole appearance is an appeal to the basest passions of men; you paint your face with the abandon of a courtesan; you gamble, drink and smoke cigarettes, and call yourself a lady; if you and your kind represent the best womanhood of America, then God help America.

DORA

Do you know to whom you are speaking?

CHIEF

Quite well. I am speaking to a girl whose grandfather came across the plains with nothing but the clothes on his back and courage in his heart; whose grandmother shared the privations and dangers of those pioneer days.

Two real Americans, honest, simple, brave. I am speaking to the granddaughter who is plebian to the core, yet apes the manner of the aristocrat, who spends the gold her forefathers grubbed from the earth over the gaming table—to a girl the stranger cannot distinguish from the fallen woman—and who seeks the protection of the police to save her from her own immodesty.

MRS. BEECHER

I'll have your star for this. We women will petition the Mayor for your resignation at once—and he dare not refuse.

CHIEF

We women——

MRS. BEECHER

Yes—the real reformers of this city.

CHIEF

The real agitators, you mean—a small minority, whose blatant voice is oftener heard in public places than in her home. The real reformer finds her life work at the cradle—not on the rostrum.

MRS. BEECHER

You are not doing your duty to this city.

CHIEF

True. If I did my duty, I would arrest the proprietors

of these swell hotels, who permit gambling in defiance of the law; I would arrest the society bridge gambler of both sexes. I would raid your society functions, whose dancing shames the Barbary Coast, from whence they came. If I did my duty, you reformers would be the first to howl.

MRS. BEECHER

The Socialists are to be congratulated on having so able a champion. It explains your interest in this wretch who insults women, and who, no doubt, will be allowed to go free.

CHIEF

He will go free—for that girl will not appear to prosecute him.

MRS. BEECHER

But I say she shall—she must.

CHIEF

Let her—and the moment she comes off the witness stand, I will arrest her as a common gambler.

DORA

Oh, Mrs. Beecher, that would be dreadful—he must not do it.

MRS. BEECHER

Calm yourself, dear—he cannot prove it.

DORA

Oh, Chief—please—please, the disgrace would be terrible.

CHIEF

You mean the publicity would be terrible—the disgrace is in being found out.

DORA

But, Chief—I did not think I was doing wrong; all the girls in my set do the same thing—I will apologize, I—

MRS. BEECHER

If you take my advice, you will do nothing of the sort.

CHIEF

Your advice, Madam. (*Pointing to Dora, who is shamed.*) There stands a living example of the teachings of you and your kind; an opportunity neglected for the glare of the public calcium; and yet you declare yourself competent to direct the affairs of this city.

MRS. BEECHER

How dare you!

CHIEF

(*Pointing at Dora.*) Look at her, and ask me again why I dare. Spoiled by riches she did not earn—she

plays cards for money—a gambler. She drinks whiskey and wine as a matter of course—a potential drunkard; she is a slave to cigarettes, which weaken her mentality; her body is decorated in a manner to excite men's basest passions; if that is a sample of what your teaching has done for the individual—what can you do for the nation? (*They hang their heads.*) Go back to your homes; teach your children the simple virtues, and before you attempt to lay down the moral law for this city—remember that reform, like charity, begins at home.

CURTAIN

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