

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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# THE FARMER'S WIFE (1928)

Alfred Hitchcock

## OVERVIEW

*Director* Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is perhaps the best-known British filmmaker and a household name. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. *The Farmer's Wife* was his seventh feature length film and begins to showcase his typical voyeuristic styling in its camera work. His most well-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, which have all earned accolades including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

*Film* This silent film was Hitchcock's third with British International Pictures. As with all of his silent adaptations of stage-plays, Elliot Stannard was the lead writer, though *The Farmer's Wife* would be his last adaptation for Hitchcock. The film was considered quite faithful to the popular play upon which it was based and was both financially and critically successful upon its initial release. Eden Phillpots, who authored the play, is said to have chosen the outdoor locations in the Devon, Somerset and Surrey countrysides. Hitchcock himself manned the camera when the lead cinematographer Jack E. Cox took ill. As a romantic comedy and with widespread distribution of the BFI's restoration, *The Farmer's Wife* may be the most accessible of Hitchcock's early works.

*Background* Thomas M. Leitch wrote in *The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock* (2002) that *The Farmer's Wife* contains a "warmth and sweetness unprecedented in Hitchcock's work and unrivaled in any of his later films before *The Trouble with Harry*." Much like that later film, the pastoral backdrop of *The Farmer's Wife* lends it a softer tone than Hitchcock's other films. One of the "Hitchcock 9", this film was restored by the British Film Institute in 2012 in their largest preservation and restoration initiative to date. Though heavily bootlegged for home video before that restoration, the restored film is easily found from multiple production companies and streaming services.

## CINEMATIC NARRATION

*The Farmer's Wife* relies heavily on stationary cameras, but does showcase some of Hitchcock's subtle trademark style with a handful of masterful camera pans. Unlike some of his other silent films, there are plenty of title cards which allow the viewer into the many conversations that occur on screen. *The Farmer's Wife* is remarkably well preserved and shows Hitchcock's strong foundation in the basics of cinematography and visual storytelling. This film stands out in its pastoral themes and imagery: Animals are given the place of minor characters and followed by the camera at several points. Expansive shots of the countryside and horseback riding are used to set the scene.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

<b>Samuel Sweetland</b>	The main protagonist and a successful farmer and widower seeking a new wife.
<b>Araminta Dench</b>	'Minta is the housekeeper on the Sweetland farm.
<b>Churdles Ash</b>	Churdles lives on the Sweetland farm and acts as Handyman and manservant.
<b>Thirza Tapper</b>	A local spinster who is prone to nervous feinting.
<b>Mary Hearn</b>	The town's postmistress. She is the third woman to whom Samuel proposes.
<b>Louisa Windeatt</b>	A widow and owner of a chicken farm nearby Sweetland's property.
<b>Mercy Bassett</b>	Mercy owns the Royal Oak Inn and acts as barmaid there.

## SYNOPSIS

Based on a popular stage-play of the same name, *The Farmer's Wife* is a simple romantic comedy. Years after losing his wife to a wasting disease, Samuel Sweetland walks his daughter down the aisle. During the reception, the aging landowner eyes the town's eligible women present and decides to marry once more. He tells his housekeeper, Araminta, that his wife's last wish was that he take another wife and they formulate a list of potential mates. Louisa Windeatt is identified as the first woman Samuel should propose to. Spinster Thirza Tapper and the town's postmistress, Mary Hearn, are identified as second and third. On the chance all the others refuse, Samuel suggests that Mercy Bassett, Inn owner and successful businesswoman who seems a bit beyond his reach, be the fourth. Samuel approaches each of these women in turn only to face rejection. Dejected and hurt, Samuel confides in 'Minta that he is considering giving up hope of ever marrying again. When she tries to help him solve his problem, he realizes his love for her and proposes. 'Minta has often imagined herself as Samuel's bride and lady of the house and accepts his proposal after a heartfelt reassurance that his proposal is true.

## PLOT

### WIFE DIES

**The Sweetland Farm-** The film opens onto a pastoral scene and pans left towards an old but well-maintained farmhouse. Churdles Ash plods along, solemnly removing his hat and entering the home. The scene fades into a shot of the home's upper story where Samuel Sweetland stands, gazing out of the open window across the countryside. He looks troubled. We see activity across the farm before the camera lands on two basset hound puppies. They cross the yard, enter the house, and scamper up the stairs, laying down on the topmost steps as Churdles stumbles from the upstairs room, down the stairs, and out the front door. From the yard, the handyman looks up at Samuel who returns his gaze with a somber shake of his head. We see the upstairs room where Samuel's family and household gather to care for his sickly wife. She speaks to Araminta before falling limp.



## DAUGHTER'S WEDDING

**The Wedding Day-** We are shown a montage of laundry being dried and aired to show the passage of time before we return to the upstairs bedroom where 'Minta lays out Samuel's suit on the empty bed. A flurry of activity erupts as Samuel enters the room and begins dressing, telling 'Minta to take care of issues in the rest of the house. She dutifully inspects wedding preparations around the house. While helping Churdles make preparations for the bride's carriage, the handyman says of Samuel "he'll be the next to wed now his daughter's marryin'." Samuel and the bridal party meet on the ground floor and leave together. The household servants remain, cooking and preparing for the reception.

**Churdles' Rant-** With the master of the house gone, Churdles eyeballs a bottle of beer only to be chided by 'Minta. He makes a show of demanding and throwing out a cup of water before sitting down near the fire. He says to 'Minta "beer drinking don't do 'alf the 'arm of love-making." "If I were the government," he continues, "I'd give the drunkards a rest and look after the lovers." Churdles continues on this line of thought until he decides to nap. Some time later, he wakes and begins to sop up the drippings of the rib roast turning in front of the fire. 'Minta returns to check on the roast and he continues his rant about the harm love does to a man, comparing marriage to a steam roller just after the servants hear the bell ring at the nearby church.

"To see an old man in  
love be worse than  
seeing him with the  
whooping cough!"

**Reception Dinner-** Samuel's daughter, Sibley, returns home with her new husband, Dick, and the duo are greeted by 'Minta at the door. Sibley seems almost dazed and Dick seems nervous while 'Minta talks excitedly, forgetting to take the young man's hat. The wedding party arrives soon thereafter, flooding the main room of the farmhouse in a flurry of greeting and seating. The party sits, prays, and eats. After the meal, the guests all sit and talk among themselves, congratulating the newlyweds in turn. At a point, Sibley sees her father's serious demeanor and becomes worried. When he makes eye contact with her, he smiles at her proudly, reassuring her. Soon thereafter, Dick's father, Henry Croaker, stands and makes a speech which makes Samuel seriously consider several of the women in the room as potential mates.



**“My little affair next Thursday...”**- The feast completed, the guests mill about the farmhouse, sharing small talk on their way out. They file out slowly after collecting their hats and other belongings, each bidding Samuel farewell. One farewell sticks out among them as Thirza Tapper takes a little bit longer than the others with her goodbye. “Now don’t forget, *Dear Mr. Sweetland*,” she says, “you are coming to my little affair next Thursday.” Samuel nods in agreement and even promises Churdles’ services as doorman despite the handyman’s obvious negative signaling. ‘Minta distributes goody bags and escorts the remaining guests out as the bride and groom bid Samuel farewell. The new couple leaves in a rain of confetti.

**Alone at Last**- The final guests trickle out leaving Samuel alone with only the household servants who are busy in the kitchen cleaning up after the feast. ‘Minta tends to him for a moment before returning to the kitchen. Alone, Samuel considers the confetti that remains on his jacket before looking up to his own wedding photo, smiling. Then he sits and considers the rocking chair opposite the one in which he sits, the one which belonged to his wife. He remembers Henry Croaker’s speech and begins to pace and preen his mustache. ‘Minta enters the room again and Samuel approaches her, striking up a conversation.



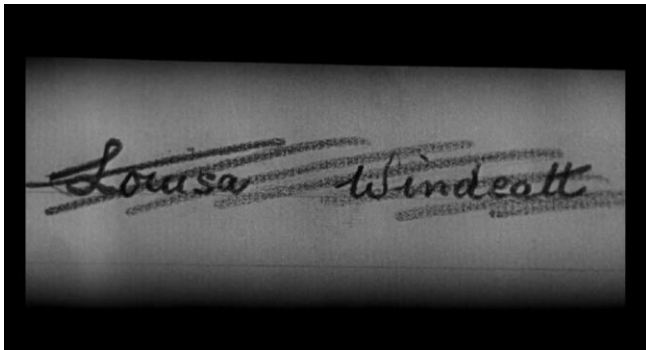
**“But she didn’t name no names”**- Samuel begins to speak about his marital status saying, “I must take time by the forelock, ‘Minta, else I’ll be a lonely man soon.” He reveals his wife’s last wish, that he wed once more. “But she didn’t name no names,” he muses. She asks if there’s anyone he’s considering and he asks for a pen and paper to “run over the possibilities.” ‘Minta returns with the paper and sits at the table and Samuel takes his seat by the fire. They ponder the various eligible women in the town and come up with a list of four names: Louisa Windeatt, Thirza Tapper, Mary Hearn, and Mercy Bassett. Before asking ‘Minta to write down a name, Samuel imagines each woman seated across from him in his wife’s old rocker. ‘Minta takes a seat opposite Samuel and they both smile.

## FIRST CANDIDATE

**A Pass at Louisa-** We see a montage of Samuel dressing and grooming himself with care. 'Minta gives him a once over by the fireside after fetching a dashing hat and cane. She opens her mouth to speak, but Samuel raises his hand and says, "There is no need to wish me luck – Louisa Windeatt will come like a lamb to the slaughter." Churdles helps the farmer mount his horse and he makes his way to Louisa's farm. On his way up the hill, he encounters the woman on the road. He joins her and they talk on their way to her chicken farm. Stable boys meet the duo and take their mounts as Samuel and Louisa enter the house. As Louisa pours drinks, she asks Samuel what brings him up her hill. He explains that he is marrying once more. Louisa sits and lifts her glass in a toast when Samuel stops her and makes his proposal. He ends on one knee, saying "Yes be a very short word."



**Scorned-** Louisa shakes her head after hearing Samuel's proposal, saying, "But there's a shorter..." Samuel says something, looking frustrated, to which Louisa responds that she isn't the woman for him because she is "far too independent." Frustrated by her continued refusal, Mr. Sweetwell begins throwing a tantrum. Louisa attempts to end the conversation amicably, as business partners, but Samuel denies her friendship saying, "don't think that I shall come up your darned hill again!" Louisa laughs at his expense as he continues to berate her. He leaves, heaping some abuse on her stable boys who grin at his misfortune. When he returns home, his tantrum continues as he flogs Churdles with his riding crop for napping and tells the staff to not allow Louisa on the property.



## SECOND CANDIDATE

**A Date with Thirza-** We are shown a shot of Thirza's invitation to her Thursday party before several pastoral shots of her rural manor. Inside, we see a sitting room arranged for a party. In the kitchen, 'Minta and Churdles prepare for the party alongside Thirza's maid. We are shown a shot of Thirza washing her face as Samuel enters the home. He is early for the party, but that is his plan. A bit of comedy unfolds as Thirza attempts to move from the bathroom to her bedroom without being seen by Samuel. Now properly dressed, Thirza greets Samuel who gives her a bushel of plums. He seats himself clumsily, knocking over decorations and photos, as Thirza delivers the plums to her maid. His boorish behavior continues as he talks to Thirza, knocking over vases and hors d'oeuvres as the hostess attempts to continue preparing for her party. Frustrated by her lack of attention, Samuel says "Hang it, Thirza Tapper, *I'm asking you to marry me!*" Thirza is shocked and falls backwards into a chair, hyperventilating. When Thirza rejects Samuel's embrace, he becomes enraged and chastises the woman.

**Thirza's Party-** After Samuel steps outside to cool off, the preparations conclude and Thirza's guests begin to arrive as Churdles comically attempts to keep his overly-large pants from falling down. The guests enjoy each other's company and Henry Croaker compliments the refreshments soon after his arrival. Outside, Samuel sees Mary Hearn, the town's postmistress, arrive and follows her in. He smiles as he watches the young postmistress converse with a party-goer, but his mood changes when he notices Louisa speaking to Thirza. Samuel takes a chance to squeeze in next to Mary on the already full couch. The final guests arrive and everyone partakes in conversation and refreshments. After the glee singers arrive, Thirza's maid instructs those who have finished eating to go out to the garden.

## THIRD CANDIDATE

**A Pass at Mary-** Locked in conversation as the rest of the guests file out into the garden, Samuel and Mary are left alone in the sitting room. The farmer attempts to convince Mary to stay inside with him, but she makes it obvious that she wants to join the others. 'Minta and Samuel share a look as he follows Mary outside. We then see Thirza's maid begin to clean up and watch Churdles try to hem his comically large pants while he eats leftovers. Thirza enters and asks that fruit be served in the garden. After some plums and a song, Samuel convinces Mary to speak with him in private where he says that he is marrying again. Mary says, "that's funny, a fortune-teller told me *I'd* be married inside a year!" He says that he might be able to tell her who it will be and leads her towards a nearby mirror, making his intentions clear.



**"But what was you doing, Sammy?"-** Mary looks into the mirror with disgust and says, "You... *you* at *your* age?" Samuel is obviously offended and makes several rebuttals, escalating the proposal into a fight when he calls Mary "full-blown and a bit over," referring to her weight. Mary, shocked and offended, sinks to a nearby couch and Samuel corners her, waving his finger and fist as he continues to insult her. He finishes and turns away, leaving Mary stunned and wondering, "is this a nightmare?" Samuel spins around and responds, "your hat is." This spurs Mary into a tantrum, yelling and throwing her fists into the air. Thirza and Henry Croaker enter the room, investigating the disturbance. Henry calls the other guests over when he sees the situation. They enter, tending to Mary. Henry then confronts Samuel, asking, "but

what was you *doing*, Sammy?" The party comes to its dramatic conclusion as Mary's tantrum continues and pushes Thirza to faint. Churdles catches her, barely keeping his pants up as he does so.

**"I'm ashamed of Samuel Sweetland"**- In front of the fire at the Sweetland farmhouse, Samuel swears to 'Minta that he is done chasing women, saying that Mercy will be like the other three women to whom he has already proposed. Churdles enters with a sour face as 'Minta attempts to console Samuel and the farmer leaves the room. As he approaches 'Minta, Churdles begins another rant, saying "I'm ashamed of Samuel Sweetland, offering himself at sale prices all around the county." Samuel overhears this and pauses in the doorway of the kitchen. As Churdles' rant continues, Samuel seems to bolster himself. He re-enters the house's main room, glowering at Churdles before commanding him to saddle his horse and 'Minta to fetch his other coat. As he leaves, 'Minta finds herself alone and ponders the rocking chair that once belonged to Mrs. Sweetwell. She sits down and stares at Samuel's empty chair, pining.



#### FOURTH CANDIDATE

**The Royal Oak Inn-** Samuel rides through the nearby town towards the business owned by Mercy Bassett, the Royal Oak Inn. Outside, a huge gathering of people and hounds mills about. Some sort of hunting competition is about to begin and the inn swarms with activity. Inside of the inn, Samuel bumps into Henry Croaker who chats his ear off, clueless to Samuel's disinterest, as the farmer makes eyes at Mercy behind the bar. When the patrons begin to clear out a little, he approaches her and strikes up an obviously friendly conversation. Their interest seems mutual based upon their body language until Samuel attempts to give Mercy the flower on his collar which she quickly rejects and returns. The hounds and fox hunters make their way into the woods and most of the people in the bar follow, leaving only chattering old Henry between Samuel and privacy with Mercy. He convinces the old man to leave and turns his attention back to Mercy. They share in a conversation and the scene fades out.



## FIFTH AND FINAL CANDIDATE

**“Tis all over, ‘Minta”**- Though we don’t see all of the events at the inn, Samuel’s face tells us he wasn’t successful with Mercy as he returns home that evening. At the front window, he can overhear Churdles complaining about the tantrum that awaits the house staff if Mr. Sweetwell returns unsuccessful. He decides to play a trick on his servants, entering the house feigning pride. Both Churdles and ‘Minta are shocked, ‘Minta clutching the rocking chair which belonged to Mrs. Sweetwell. Samuel dismisses Churdles and drops his act. He sits at the table and confides in his housekeeper, “‘Tis all over, ‘Minta.” As he continues to bemoan his lack of success with women, blaming the whole sex, ‘Minta chastises him: “I won’t hear a strong, sensible man talk like that.” After a long conversation, Samuel admits that his attitude has been partially to blame for his misfortune and gives up his selfish pride as he proposes to ‘Minta, a woman whom he has long admired. ‘Minta seems willing to accept his proposal outright but she holds back. When he confirms his feelings and proposal to be true, ‘Minta accepts. He tells her to find the party dress his daughter bought for her and put it on. She leaves to do so.



**The Farmer’s Wife**- Samuel is obviously excited as he waits for ‘Minta to return when Thirza and Marry enter the farmhouse unexpectedly. Thirza and Mary push at each other to reach Samuel first. Mary confides, “I’ve changed my mind, Samuel.” Next, Thirza whispers something in Samuel’s ear, making the farmer smirk as he sets the two women against each other with a few words. Henry Croaker enters, a bit bewildered at the presence of Thriza and Mary, with news of a prospective bride for Samuel. Samuel smiles proudly and announces that he has made his selection and invites the old man to drink to the bride-to-be. The visitors are surprised when ‘Minta descends the stairs wearing a striking dress. Thirza with his good coat. Then, Samuel leads a toast saying, “and if anybody knows a woman with a gentler heart and a straighter back and a nobler character, I’d like to see her.”and Henry congratulate the new couple as Mary throws a tantrum. ‘Minta leaves and returns once more





## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Gender-** *The Farmer's Wife* has a surprisingly nuanced view of women for the time period. While some of the women in the story display traits typically described as hysterical, these behaviors are used only as valid responses to Samuel's boorish behavior and among them only Mary's childlike tantrums are portrayed as an obvious character flaw. The women on Samuel's list are independent or successful in their own right. Louisa owns and operates a large chicken farm, Thirza is a local spinster socialite, Mary is the town's postmistress, and Mercy owns the most successful inn in town. Churdles' misogynistic attitudes are framed comically as his opinions typically rise above his class and beyond his experience. Samuel's social ineptitude and sexist attitude drive much of the conflict and comedy in the film as his ill-conceived proposals earn him scorn and mockery. He is constantly disappointed by women's unwillingness to submit to his will until he gives a heartfelt and prideless proposal to his housekeeper 'Minta at the end of the film. Because his proposal aligns with her desire to be the woman of the house and Samuel's words are true, she accepts his proposal and becomes the farmer's wife.

### RELATIONSHIP

**Love** Love and marriage are obvious themes of this romantic comedy. The film starts with a wedding and ends with a successful proposal. We see love between Samuel and his daughter, Tibby, before her wedding and during the reception. She is worried that her wedding is reminding him too much of her mother when he catches her gaze and immediately breaks into a prideful smile. He is proud of his daughter and, while pained that she will leave, glad that she has found love.

**Marriage-** The theme of marriage presents itself very obviously in Samuel's quest to find a wife, but also in Hitchcock's subtle portrayals of imagination. Samuel often imagines his potential mates in the rocking chair opposite his own. They appear as ghostly apparitions of a possible future. This theme is made concrete when 'Minta sits down opposite to Samuel at the end of the film, interrupting one such imagination sequence. This action leads Samuel to realize his deep love and admiration of 'Minta after which he proposes.

### PSYCHOLOGY

**Loss-** Loss is a powerful theme in *The Farmer's Wife*. The story begins with Mrs. Sweetland's wasting illness and the somber attitudes of her family and household servants. We watch Mr. Sweetland ponder the countryside plaintively and shake his head when Churdles looks up to him from the front yard, noting that his wife's health continues to decline. Though it doesn't appear on screen, we are acutely aware of Mrs. Sweetland's passing when 'Minta places Mr. Sweetland's dress clothes on the empty bed. We are made aware of Mrs. Sweetland's absence in numerous other ways: Samuel can often be seen gazing at his wife's rocking chair and at their wedding photo above the mantle. We can tell the loss of his wife hurts him as can other characters. At her own wedding, his daughter shows obvious sympathy for him as she catches his serious expression during the reception. She knows that the death of his wife and her mother weighs on him and it obviously worries her. We watch 'Minta struggle with loss when Samuel plays a trick on her and Churdles when he acts like he was successful in proposing to Mercy. 'Minta believes her dream of becoming Mrs. Sweetwell has come to an end and clutches the rocker, the symbol of her dream, as if it will disappear.

### FLAWS

**Pride-** Samuel is certainly the most prideful character in this film, but others display the trait as well. Churdles' misogynistic pride often waxes comically. He has a lot of opinions about women and everything, but using his own position as a lazy servant as a foil, it is easy to find humor and some veiled truth in his rants. Churdles' pride is used comically in his obvious distaste when Samuel offers his service to Thirza as doorman at her upcoming party which continues as his special uniform for the event is over-

sized and in disrepair. Pride arises for Samuel's potential mates from time to time. Louisa laughs in Samuel's face when he proposes, pridefully stating that she is far too independent to marry the likes of him. Then, Mary displays obvious pride as well when she expresses disgust for Samuel's age during his proposal. In the ensuing argument, she shows that she thinks a lot of herself and that her pride can drive her to temper tantrums. Thirza and Mary's pride butt heads at the post office towards the end of the film when they both reveal to each other that Samuel had proposed to them, leading them to an impromptu competition in returning Samuel's affections to become his bride. We see Mary's tantrum repeated at the film's conclusion when she realizes that Samuel has selected 'Minta instead of her, wounding her pride once more.

## **QUEST**

**Search** - Samuel's search for a bride is a quest with a comic twist. After setting his plan with 'Minta's assistance, Samuel mounts his horse and rides off for Louisa's farm, much like an errant knight. We watch Samuel fail again and again. Because of this, like in the Hero's Journey, Samuel is pushed to give up his quest for a wife twice. Bumbling Churdles takes the place of a wisened master as the comments Mr. Sweetland overhears push him to redouble his efforts several times through the film. As in most quests, we see hints of destiny as Hitchcock reminds us with clever staging that 'Minta has fallen for Samuel. By the time she accepts Samuel's proposal, the viewer is sure that 'Minta was his destiny all along.

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **SAMUEL SWEETLAND**     **Agreeable** (Short tempered – Prideful – Socially incompetent)

Samuel is the middle aged protagonist of the film. The aging farmer is a widower with a successful farmer. His quest to find a new wife after the marriage of his only daughter is the main plot line of the film.

*Short-tempered-* We are shown many examples of Samuel's temper. At the beginning of the film, he is frustrated with his dress clothes and harasses 'Minta about his problems and misplaced accessories. With each rejection, we can see his temper flare. When Louisa laughs at his proposal, he insults her and harasses her stable hands. He arrives home afterwards and he attempts to cut Louisa out of his life, telling the staff to not allow her on the property. Samuel reacts so strongly to Thirza's rejection that she nearly faints, and his failed proposal to Mary launches into a full-blown tirade against the young woman. We see him beat Churdles out of frustration when he returns from Louisa's and the servants all seem to fear his rage at several points in the film. In the end, Samuel realizes that his short-temper leads him to act in a boorish manner and disavows the selfish pride which fuels it before he proposes to 'Minta.

*Prideful-* Samuel's pride drives the main plot and conflicts in *The Farmer's Wife*. He acts like a peacock, strutting around in his finest clothes, asking seemingly any available woman to marry him without so much as learning if they are romantically interested first. His reaction whenever he faces rejection is frustration and anger: With his injured pride fueling his anger, he semi-comically pushes away the very women he wanted to marry. We see the pleasant side of Samuel's pride during his daughter's wedding reception when he proudly presents her to the reception party and smiles at her after the feast. At the end of the film, we see Samuel realize how selfish his pride is and how it pushes people away. This lack of pride shows 'Minta that he is serious in his marriage proposal and she accepts.

*Socially Incompetent-* Samuel Sweetwell is hilariously incompetent in many social situations. Sometimes it is simple rudeness, but at others he seems completely clueless to his own ineptitude. We see the same ineptness play out in each of his proposals before 'Minta; he makes no attempt to court any of the women to whom he proposes. Two are obviously disgusted with his proposal, Thirza cannot bear the touch of a man, and Mercy makes it fairly clear that they are just friends. He shows himself unable to act in a gentlemanly manner when rejected time and time again. Samuel hurls insults and abuse instead of backing down and accepting symbols of friendship. When confronted, Samuel simply flees, such as when his behavior causes Mary to rage and Thirza to faint. He makes no real effort to respect Henry Croaker at the Royal Oak Inn when the old man attempts to make conversation with his new in-law. It would be

simple for Samuel to tell Henry that he is there to see Mercy, but instead he simply ignores and then distracts the old man.

**ARAMINTA DENCH** **Agreeable** (Calm – Dutiful – Dreamer)

Araminta is the primary housekeeper and servant in the Sweetland home. Everyone calls her 'Minta. She is quiet and level-headed, but she commands the household skillfully and speaks her mind when she needs to. She often dreams of becoming the mistress of the house.

*Calm-* 'Minta is a beacon of civility. Her level head and calm composure make her an excellent housekeeper and head servant. She conducts the preparations for the reception dinner, flowing from one task to the next without ever showing signs of stress or frustration. Whenever Samuel grows frustrated and angry in her presence, she keeps calm and often instructs him on ways that he could remedy his problems. Even when Churdles gets on her nerves or shares his flawed opinions about women, 'Minta calmly corrects him or redirects him which helps her earn the handyman's respect at the end of the film when he promises to help her keep Samuel under control. The only time we see 'Minta lose her cool is when she thinks Samuel's proposal to Mercy was successful. We see her clutch the rocking chair, the symbol of the farmer's wife, as if it is about to run away.

*Dutiful-* 'Minta is a dutiful housekeeper. She is shown being consistently helpful and prepared. Her actions and opinions reveal her forward-thinking nature. Though she hopes to be Mr. Sweetwell's selection in his quest for a mate, 'Minta dutifully helps him create a list of eligible women in the town. This behavior is repeated at the end of the film when Samuel confides in her. He is disgruntled and hopeless after Mercy's rejection, and though 'Minta is hopeful that she will be his bride, she still makes helpful suggestions of eligible women in the surrounding county. She never loses her sense of duty, fetching Samuel's best coat at the end of the film despite his protest that she need not work as a servant.

*Dreamer-* 'Minta is one of the two characters whose imagination we're allowed to see. Where Samuel envisions the women he proposes to in the rocking chair opposite his own, 'Minta imagines herself and Mr. Sweetwell seated across from her. The imaginative 'Minta flexes her forward thinking nature when Samuel comes to her to make his initial list of potential mates. With each woman after Louisa, she can imagine some potential flaw in the pairing and mentions these to Samuel who simply dismisses them. We can see that her concerns are valid as Samuel fails each time. Though she is a dreamer, she doesn't let this trait cloud her judgment. We can see this most clearly in the film's conclusion when she seeks reassurance that Samuel's feelings and proposal are true. With Samuel's heartfelt words of comfort, 'Minta achieves her dream of becoming the lady of the house.

**CHURDLES ASH** **Disagreeable** (Lazy – Opiniated – Bumbling)

Churdles is Samuel Sweetland's handyman and manservant. Most of his screen time is used comically, though his rants often include important grains of truth. He is shown to be a lover of beer and strongly dislikes serious effort.

*Lazy-* One of Churdles' more comic traits is his chronic laziness. The beginning of the film shows him plodding through the house and across the yard at a snail's pace. Although this shows the household's grief in Mrs. Sweetland's wasting illness, he never picks up the pace as the movie continues. He is shown to be more concerned with filling his belly than helping out in the kitchen. He can't even be bothered to fill a cup with water when 'Minta stops him from opening the beer for the reception dinner. He often naps at the fireside in the kitchen while others work, leading Mr. Sweetwell to beat him with a riding crop in one instance.

*Opinionated-* Churdles has endless opinions about seemingly everything. He mostly talks about Samuel's quest for a new bride and this often brings out his misogynistic feelings about women, his pessimistic attitudes about love and romance, and his personal pride and false nobility. Churdles doesn't seem to care who hears his opinions besides Samuel, whom he often chastises for chasing women and being rejected. Churdles is a foil to Samuel in several ways, making most of his rants and opinions surprisingly poignant to the situation and the story.

*Bumbling-* Churdles Ash is shown to be incompetent in a number of ways. During the preparations for the wedding, he is unable to tie a simple bow in the ribbons decorating the carriage. He plods along in such a way that makes his every movement seem unstable, almost as if he is constantly hung over. His longest comic act includes attempting to hide the fact that his pants are several sizes too large while also trying to keep them from falling down. He makes several attempts to repair the pants, but is unable to fix the problem before the party is over. He makes it especially hard for himself when he tries to eat leftovers and sew at the same time.