

# A Wife for the Pastor.

By CHAPIN HOWARD.

When the Rev. Gilbert Bancroft began his pastorate in Windham, it was felt by the members of the village church that they had secured all-in-all a great deal more than they had any reason to expect. They had treated themselves to the pleasurable excitement of listening to a long line of candidates, considering and rejecting, until one Sunday morning a slim young preacher had arisen in the pulpit and surveyed them earnestly with a pair of very fine gray eyes.

His frock coat fitted perfectly, his collar and tie were iron-onachable, and as it had been previously ascertained that he was hampered by neither a family nor a cough, an instantaneous conviction swept through the feminine half of the audience that here, at last, was the man for whom they had been waiting. In a few isolated cases of spinsterhood this conviction even assumed a more personal significance.

The more conservative, masculine part of the congregation waited for the sermon before committing itself to a decision—happily unconscious that it was taking an entirely unnecessary precaution, and that the candidate had been engaged practically from the first moment. Before the singing of the second hymn, Mrs. Saxton, the wife of one of the deacons, was already congratulating herself on the fact that her daughter, Milly, sitting unsuspectingly at her side, had always been carefully reared, and was fitted in every way to take up the duties of a minister's wife. The parsonage roof, of course, would have to be repaired, and she would insist upon the Ladies' Society repairing the parlor; otherwise the house would do very well as it was.

At the close of the service, by skillful maneuvering and from the vantage of a front pew, the deacon's wife secured a promise from the candidate to take tea with her during the first week of his pastorate, and her invitation was only the first in a royal salute of welcome which rained upon him from all the tea tables in the village, as soon as it was definitely known that he would accept the call extended to him by the church.

The parsonage was a low-roofed, pleasant looking white home, standing well back from the street, on a gentle rise of lawn, and protected from the too close scrutiny of its neighbors by a baffling hedge of locust trees and shrubbery. Here, in the library on the south side of the house, young Mr. Bancroft established himself with his typewriter and his books, scattering through the other rooms his scanty supply of furniture, the somewhat battered equipment of his seminary days. He engaged as housekeeper, Mrs. Emily Kimbal, an elderly widow of his congregation, and she at once assumed a motherly charge of the minister and his affairs.

She was inclined to view rather skeptically the frank outburst of cordiality with which the ladies of the congregation sought to make their new pastor feel at home. He, however, accepted all his invitations courteously, starting out every afternoon punctually at five, faintly attired in clothes of a noticeably city cut, his fine, abstracted gaze unconscious of the admiring scrutiny of half the village. Mrs. Kimbal never failed to observe him critically from the shelter of the parlor blinds.

"My land!" she remarked scornfully to herself. "Any one would think they was tryin' ter pay for the 'spiritual food they get on Sunday by feedin' him upon cake an' preserves all through the week. An' when they can't ask him out, they're a sendin' of things in. There's enough jell an' spice-cake in the pantry now to keep him for a year. First they know they will ruin his digestion an' then they'll have him preachin' hot-fire an' damnation at 'em fit to kill!"

It was true that everything feminine ingenuously could devise had been showered upon the young clergyman to relieve the supposed barrenness of his existence. And from endless culinary delicacies he found himself the possessor of a bewildering array of Bible-markers, embroidered slippers and sofa cushions, all of which he gave over into his housekeeper's charge with a rather helpless air.

The church in Windham was only his second pastorate and he was young and very much in earnest. He had been persuaded to accept the call principally because he believed that here he had found a definite work waiting to be done. From the first Sunday that he had preached in the village he had set his heart upon securing the erection of a new church to replace the present old, dilapidated structure.

Apparently his plan met with ready sympathy and encouragement on every side. The more influential men of his congregation, whom he approached first, listened to him attentively, and urged him to call and talk the matter over more thoroughly. Meanwhile, all the services of the church were well attended, and the outlook for success appeared most gratifyingly bright.

But subtly and by degrees a conviction seemed to have insinuated itself among his congregation that one of the very qualifications which had at first recommended him to their favor was, perhaps, after all, proving somewhat of a drawback. It began to be quite generally felt, and even delicately hinted, that a bachelor clergyman's usefulness was necessarily limited. Several kind, motherly ladies,

who were possessed of daughters or deces of a marriageable age, admitted to him (confidentially) that they sighed whenever they thought of the loneliness of his life in that great parsonage. One or two even playfully remonstrated with him—there were so many sweet, sensible girls in his congregation who were in every way fitted to be ministers' wives.

The Rev. Gilbert Bancroft was at first puzzled, then disconcerted, and finally genuinely annoyed at this solicitude shown on his behalf. He found it humiliating to admit that the interest and enthusiasm which he honestly believed he had succeeded in arousing in the building of the new church were, in reality, only the thin cloak to various sentimental schemes for inveigling him into matrimony against his will. His young confidence and belief in his congregation were severely shaken, and he passed through a period of marked depression and discouragement, which Mrs. Kimbal noticed with an experienced eye.

"He's beginnin' to find out what they are a-drivin' at," she mused. "an' he's a tryin' not to have any un-Christian thoughts agin' 'em, poor man. Seems as if they was afraid they wasn't a-gettin' their money's worth, hirin' a single man."

At first Mr. Bancroft had thought to put an end to these embarrassing suggestions by announcing firmly that he did not intend to marry. But he was baffled and enraged to observe that this was indulgently regarded merely as the first step in his inevitable surrender. There was no apparent abatement in the futile schemes to ensnare him, and he continued to find himself an unwilling, but outwardly courteous guest, at tea-tables graced by the presence of some demure and blushing village maiden whose virtues and accomplishments were sure to be made the subject of many a covert allusion for his benefit. The hearts of his parishioners were evidently set upon his marrying, and they could give their attention to nothing else. The new church, in the minds of the ladies at least, was a secondary consideration, and could very well afford to wait.

The thought of failing in this, his first ambitious undertaking, was intolerable to him, but after six months of unavailing protest he found himself reduced to a state of unwholesome resignation, and realizing that his patience was exhausted, he determined to seek refuge temporarily in flight. And so, having secured an old time friend of his seminary days to occupy the pulpit during his absence, he arranged with the committee of the church to be away from Windham for three weeks.

The departure occasioned considerable surprise, and a number of theories were advanced to account for it satisfactorily—the most complacent and widely credited being that he had gone away to get the ring. No one felt exactly in a position to supply particulars, but a feeling of pleased expectancy spread through the village. There were so many vacant third fingers upon which that ring might fittingly be placed! Gossip and speculation increased as the time for his return drew near. A sensation was confidently expected, and it came.

The unguessed truth burst with the paralyzing suddenness of a bomb among the startled congregation. The Rev. Gilbert Bancroft had been married quietly, and was bringing home his bride!

The news was received with mingled feelings of incredulity and dismay. Mrs. Kimbal was appealed to on all sides for confirmation. Scant satisfaction, however, was to be obtained from her. She would neither affirm nor deny.

"Anyway, it's just what you've all been a-hopin' an' a-prayin' for, ain't it?" she demanded.

"I wouldn't be so upset about it, though, if I were you. It don't look just orthodox—bein' so surprised to find your prayer's been answered."

Mrs. Saxton voiced the general opinion of the flock when she replied that if a minister made up his mind to marry "it seemed hardly necessary for him to go outside his own congregation."

"It wasn't necessary," Mrs. Kimbal admitted. "Land, no! But why do you a-spose I sent to the city when I got my new alpaca three years ago—stead of buyin' it here to the store? Because they didn't keep the line of goods I was lookin' for. So it ain't surprisin', is it, he should feel the same?"

A few days later all doubts were set at rest when, just at dusk, an unfamiliar covered carriage, with a large trunk strapped behind, clattered up the village street, and stopped before the parsonage gate. The Rev. Gilbert Bancroft alighted, and then, turning, lifted out a slender, girlish figure, stylishly gowned in black and wearing a heavy veil. The two passed slowly up the walk, beneath the searching gaze of half the village, the lady leaning heavily upon her husband's arm. Mrs. Kimbal met them in the hall, the trunk was brought in, then the door closed and the carriage drove away.

The village gaped.

The following Sunday all Windham attended morning service. But its curiosity was destined to go unsatisfied. The Rev. Gilbert Bancroft entered the church alone, and made his way composedly into the pulpit. His eager

congregation could scarcely wait for the benediction to be pronounced before they crowded about him, congratulating and exclaiming. All the ladies, it appeared, had expected to see the bride at church.

He met all inquiries with his usual reticence. There had always been something in his manner which checked inquisitiveness, and it was felt more strongly than ever now. He thanked them pleasantly. Yes, it had been very sudden. Still he had felt sure that his congregation would approve heartily of the idea if they had known. But Mrs. Bancroft was very frail, and would have to be allowed to do good in her own way. He had brought her to Windham only on the condition that she might be sure of the same absolute quiet in which, for the last few years, she had been compelled to live. He hoped she might exert a great influence for good, but would beg the ladies to excuse her from receiving calls. The flock withdrew, baffled and a little over-awed.

During the next few days, however, in spite of the request, several well-meaning ladies insisted upon "just running in" to see their pastor's wife.

But they were met by Mrs. Kimbal and the unchanging announcement that Mrs. Bancroft begged to be excused. No one succeeded in penetrating the impregnable wall of privacy which seemed to hedge her in. Occasionally, just at dusk, she might be seen through openings in the shrubbery, pacing slowly up and down the walk before the house, leaning on her husband's arm. She was always trimly gowned in unvarying black with a white shawl thrown about her shoulders. She was very stately, with abundant brown hair, and in the twilight looked noticeably pale.

These infrequent and distant glimpses of their pastor's wife were all that the congregation were able to obtain. As time went on she took no part in the church work and attended none of the services. Her existence became the mystery of the quiet village life. Young Mr. Bancroft was dexterously plied with questions on all sides, but he parried them as skillfully with that guarded manner now become habitual.

Mrs. Kimbal's invariable reply was pithy—and almost belligerent: "I can't see as folks has any reason to complain. She married him, didn't she?—not the deacons an' the whole congregation."

One determined effort—and only one—was made to storm the lady's resolute seclusion. Placid Deacon Saxton was chosen for the task. Having been carefully instructed and rehearsed by his wife, he made his way dourly up the grand path to the parsonage one evening when Rev. and Mrs. Bancroft could be seen taking their usual twilight promenade. At sight of the approaching figure the minister turned and led his wife to the far end of the walk. There he left her and returning greeted his visitor with a challenging cordiality while the lady remained standing by a lilac bush, her graceful back half turned. Deacon Saxton, very much disconcerted by the unexpected coolness of his reception, stammered out his errand. But before he had half finished he was cut short by an indignant exclamation from Mrs. Kimbal who sped past them from the house. The lady by the lilac bush lay prostrate on the grass.

Mr. Bancroft sprang to her side, perceptibly waving back the deacon, who, thoroughly appalled at the disastrous consequences of his intrusion, beat a hasty retreat toward the gate. There, glancing back, he could see the unconscious, black-clad figure being carried tenderly toward the house.

Instead of being solved, the mystery had only deepened. Even the twilight promenades were now abandoned and no glimpse was caught of Mrs. Bancroft during the fall or winter. After many fruitless efforts village curiosity was, for once, obliged to admit itself completely baffled, and the mystery was reluctantly left to Time, the great unraveller.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Gilbert Bancroft had been steadily at work raising money for the building of the new church. Since he had chosen to settle his own matrimonial future he had been free to pursue his scheme, unhampered by the halo of romance which had before surrounded him. Public interest had shifted temporarily from his own personality to his wife's and the former zeal of his congregation for church work, abated somewhat. But he worked on steadily, his earnestness and perseverance carrying him through moments of discouragement and apparent failure until, at the beginning of spring, he had accomplished the seemingly impossible—the money for the new church had actually been raised.

Then, one Sunday morning, he electrified his congregation by quietly reading his resignation. He felt, he told them, that his work in Windham was successfully completed, thanks to their own generosity. He had decided to accept a call to a larger church in a distant state where the opportunity for work was greater, for he was young with a young man's ambitions.

In spite of the loyal protests of his congregation, he resolutely declined to reconsider this determination, and during the next few weeks began the packing and shipping of his household goods. Although he made no mention of the fact in connection with his going, it was generally believed that Mrs. Bancroft's health formed the real reason for the change.

Would she leave Windham without meeting any of the members of her husband's church? This was the question which the village discussed with growing excitement as the day of departure drew near. But Mr. Bancroft made his hurried round of farewell calls alone, and in response to covert

hints and open inquiries merely expressed his regret that his congregation could not have had the pleasure of knowing his wife, but he begged them to believe that he would have arranged it if it had been possible. He should always remember his Windham friends most pleasantly.

"An' invalid wife is goin' to be a terrible drag on him," Mrs. Saxton prophesied to her daughter, Milly, as they watched the slim, athletic figure striding down their front path to the gate. "But she ain't hindered him from doin' a grand, good work here. We couldn't never have got the new church if it hadn't been for him."

The next evening the carriage which was to carry Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft the three miles to the station, drew up before the parsonage, and later the whole village heard it when it drove away. Mrs. Kimbal remained over one more day to close the house, then she locked the front door, hung the key on its familiar nail in the woodshed and was carried off by the stage for a long visit with her brother's family in North Walpole.

The deserted house had a lonely look behind its screen of shrubbery, as it stood awaiting the arrival of its next occupant.

Late one afternoon, nearly a week after the departure of the minister and his wife, Milly Saxton burst into the kitchen where her mother was preparing supper. Her shawl, which had slipped from her shoulders, streamed out behind her. Her eyes were wide with terror.

"Ma!" she gasped, clutching her mother by the arm. "Didn't Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft go last week?—didn't we hear 'em go?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Saxton, blankly. "They were goin' to take that nine o'clock train at Derry. An' Em'ly Kimbal, she went next day."

"Well, Mrs. Bancroft's come back!" cried the girl, hysterically. "She's up there at the house!"

"Oh, my land!" exclaimed Mrs. Saxton. "I just ran up to peek in the window an' see if they'd taken all their things, an' when I put my face up against the glass there she stood lookin' at me in that empty room. I thought I was goin' to drop right where I was, but I just shut my eyes an' give one scream an' ran. It was awful!"

The girl dropped into a chair. Her mother stood looking at her for several minutes. Then she threw her apron over her head and went to the kitchen door.

"Ezra!" she called. "Ezra!" Just you step here a minute."

Deacon Saxton appeared with an empty milk pail in each hand.

"I want you should come up to the parsonage along with Milly an' me. Mrs. Bancroft's up there. Somethin's wrong or she wouldn't have come back."

Deacon Saxton followed his wife unhesitatingly as she led the way across the yard and up the street and turned in at the parsonage gate. Milly, pale and frightened, brought up the rear. Mrs. Saxton scuttled around to the woodshed and, returning with the key, handed it to her husband. He unlocked the door and they entered the bare, forlorn-looking hall.

"She's in the parlor!" Milly whispered, shrinkingly.

The two women stood huddled close together as the Deacon tip-toed over to the parlor door and pushed it open, gently. There by the mantel stood Mrs. Bancroft slenderly erect in her black gown, the white shawl falling about her shoulders.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said Deacon Saxton, retreating abashed, and pulling off his hat.

The lady stared immovably out of the window with her pretty, colorless face. There was not a quiver of her stylishly-clad figure. With a gasp Mrs. Saxton brushed by her husband. She crossed the room and caught hold of the white shawl—then she leaned back weakly against the mantel-piece. The power of speech seemed suddenly to have forsaken her.

"There ain't any real Mrs. Bancroft," she said, at length, dully. "There hasn't never been. She's just one of them wire figgers, with a wax head, they have in stores."

Her bewildered gaze encountered a piece of white paper pinned upon the sleeve. She unfastened it with trembling fingers and crossing over to the window read it aloud by the fading light. It was in Mrs. Kimbal's handwriting:

"I promised the minister I'd burn up Mrs. Bancroft before I went away. But I couldn't seem to do it, now. She was all my idea, and the minister he didn't like deceivin' folks—but he was drove to it, poor man! If it had not been for her he couldn't never have raised the money to build the new church, and there's so many match-making folks in Windham it's going to be a lesson to them to know the truth."

Mrs. Saxton's eyes traveled consciously from the immovable figure by the mantel to where Milly stood beside her father in the doorway.

"Em'ly Kimbal never spoke a truer word!" she said.—Good Literature.

### Wanted One Mourner.

The lawyer was drawing up Enpeck's will "I hereby bequeath all my property to my wife," dictated Enpeck. "Got that down?" "Yes," answered the attorney. "On condition," continued Enpeck, "that she marries within a year." "But why that condition?" asked the man of law. "Because," answered the meek and lowly testator, "I want somebody to be sorry that I died."—The Argonaut.

New York city has one public park that is 250 years old, and that is Bowling Green, which was the playground of the first Dutch settlers.



### Grade Market Poultry.

Grade poultry before marketing. If you have a lot of fat hens, a few old hens, persistent brooders, and some cocks to dispose of, grade them according to size and quality. Good hens in the same coop with old birds and broodies will not raise their quality birds, but they will be dragged down to the level of the poorest bird, and cocks detract from the appearance of the entire coop. There is no good reason why a uniform price should be paid for all chickens.—Farmers Home Journal.

### The Difference in Breeding.

An old breeder of Shorthorn cattle says that his high grade Shorthorn calves at weaning time will sell for as much as common breed steers when a year old. That is a pretty good test of breeding when it comes down to actual dollars. The calf of high grade just weaned at a few weeks old has cost very little to grow it, but the yearling common steer has cost over \$25 to carry him to one year old. Our friends say that he is careful to keep a pure bred bull at the head of his herd of grade cows, and in this way always manages to turn off some high grade steers for beef at 20 to 24 months old that brings him \$85 to \$95 per head, and of course he says it is all due to good breeding and good feeding.

Instances of this kind illustrate the value of good blood at the head of the herd better than anything else can. Even with fairly good common cows, with a well bred bull, the herd can soon be so improved as to greatly increase its product.—Indiana Farmer.

### Why We Should Cultivate.

At a farmers' institute, lately held, the writer heard a city man remark to a farmer that if there were no weeds all the farmer need to do would be to sow his crop and then reap, and to my surprise the farmer seemed to sanction almost every word of the remark, as he publicly gave vent to his feelings in regard to originating something that would annihilate the weeds.

Of course this man was no criterion to go by, but there are hundreds and thousands just like him. Cultivating is done because of several reasons and the killing of the weeds is but one of the many reasons. Cultivated plants will grow alongside of weeds, but, of course, will not do well; but without cultivation all useful plants will fail to grow, and this one fact assures us that it will forever be impossible for the farmer to grow that which he has sown without a goodly amount of hoeing or cultivating or something that will take their place. The sooner the "tillage is manure" theory takes hold of our farmers the better, for cultivation unlocks fertility and plants cannot exist without it.—Weekly Witness.

### Bran Mash for Horses.

This is a common feed for horses by all good horsemen, but all do not take the pains to make the mash properly. An old horse feeder says that to make a good bran mash, first wash out a bucket with boiling water, then pour in the quantity of water required, say three pints, and stir in three pounds of bran. Cover up and leave it for a couple of hours or more if not required for immediate use a mash takes hours to get cold and is often given to a sick horse too hot and refused when it would have been taken if properly prepared and given warm instead of scalding hot. The addition of a tablespoonful of salt in the ordinary mash of a Saturday night can be recommended to keep down parasites and promote digestion, but should not be part of a sick horse's diet unless specially ordered. A mixture of linseed and bran is often prescribed, both as food and a poultice. To one part of linseed, two of bran is a desirable proportion for both purposes. To get all the feeding value out of linseed, several hours should be allowed for cooking, not mere infusing, as with a bran mash, but gently simmering on the side of the stove. The vessels should be filled and towards the end the lid may be taken off and evaporation permitted while cooking.—Indiana Farmer.

### Cultivation Makes Fruit.

We must put brain work into fruit growing to succeed. I believe over half the fruit trees set during the past fifteen years have never paid the first cost of the tree. The trees, as a rule, are all right, but the fault is with us. We are allowing them to starve to death. Nothing on our farms will show good care quicker or make a larger return than a fruit tree. This is the line of argument advanced by V. P. DeCoster, of Oxford county, Me., in an address before the Maine Pomological society.

Continuing, he said: "I believe we are making a mistake in allowing our trees to bear too heavily. I think a tree properly dressed, pruned and thinned will bear every year. When it is allowed to overbear it brings such a strain upon it that it takes years for it to recuperate. All small and wormy fruit should be picked off before it ripens. I have visited many of the most successful orchardists of the state and it appears to me that the continued use of commercial fertiliz-

ers sown or spread upon the grass ground will cause the grass to become root-bound and hard and you do not get the results sought.

"Cultivation aids the chemicals so that better results appear than when omitted. Fine cultivation with the application of liberal fertilizer has been employed to the improvement of both trees and fruit. Therefore, the result of my observation is, that the orchardists who are getting the best results are those who are fertilizing and cultivating their orchards. Some are doing it in one way and some in another. Apples should be thinned usually early in July. All varieties do not need it. Rhode Island Greening and Spy are in this class. Baldwins should be thinned."

### Care of Poultry.

If your poultry house is tight and dry, the hens will not have roup or rattling in the throat. A little cold is not nearly so harmful as drafts or dampness.

How about installing an incubator for hatching in the spring? No farmer who started with a good machine ever regretted the step. Think it over. We'll give you some valuable pointers on the subject in the next issue or two.

Then there is another matter that is becoming of paramount importance at the present time. We refer to the matter of getting eggs in winter. Watch for some interesting information along this line next month. But here is something for you to think over in the meantime.—The first essential in the production of eggs is the health of the hens. You can never have a flock of record-breaking egg producers if any of them are lacking in vigor or stamina.

Hen's eggs are preferable to pullet's eggs for hatching purposes, for as a rule the eggs from hens are larger and contain stronger germs which give more vigorous chicks. On the other hand, pullets are sure to produce the larger number of eggs.

The man who sticks to one breed from year to year, through all its ups and downs, is certain in the long run to enjoy the fruits of his constancy. A good poultryman can make a good success with any breed.

The comb of a fowl occupies the same position as an indicator of the health as does the tongue of a person. A healthy comb is a deep red; any other color means that something is wrong.

Give your fowls all they can do during the day, but never all they can eat. In the morning give them just enough to free them from the extreme pangs of hunger and make them work for all they get. Leave the filling of their crops till night. This will prevent them from getting into the bad habit of inactivity.—Epitomist.

### Notes From the Farm.

Never shout at a young horse while training him.

Good feeding consists in giving as much as the hog will eat.

Give the hogs plenty of charcoal and ashes. Salt once a week.

Keep plenty of clean water within reach of your hogs at all times.

Much sickness among hogs is due to uncertain quarters, wet pens and exposure.

In cattle feeding, cow pea and alfalfa hay make up a good substitute for wheat bran.

Watch your horses' eyes. Many a horse could be saved from blindness if commonsense care were given in time.

Horses which are judiciously fed and well groomed will stand double the amount of hard work they would under careless care.

The brood mare should have a few hours' exercise in the yard or on the road every day. It does not pay to keep her confined.

One hundred pounds of wheat bran contains 12.2 pounds of digestive protein, 39.2 pounds of digestible carbohydrates and 2.7 pounds either extract or fat.

Pigs suffering from scours may be helped and many times cured by feeding them milk that has been boiled and to which a pint of scorched flour has been added for each gallon.

All kinds of growing stock should have plenty of exercise. Animal growth cannot be made successfully unless every muscle has had an opportunity to be brought into use.

### Slaughter of the Birds.

It is said that Paris milliners alone consume every year about 70,000 sea-gulls. One single dealer sold during the last 12 months 32,000 humming birds and 800,000 pairs of wings of every description.

A writer in the Gentlewoman calculates that more than three hundred million of birds are sacrificed to the vanity of women in the so-called civilized countries and the result of the slaughter is already making itself felt. Some countries are now almost quite depopulated of their winged inhabitants.

The Labrador duck is almost extinct. So is the pigeon of Saint Maurice, the Auckland rail, the bullfinch of the Azores, the white headed titmouse and many others.