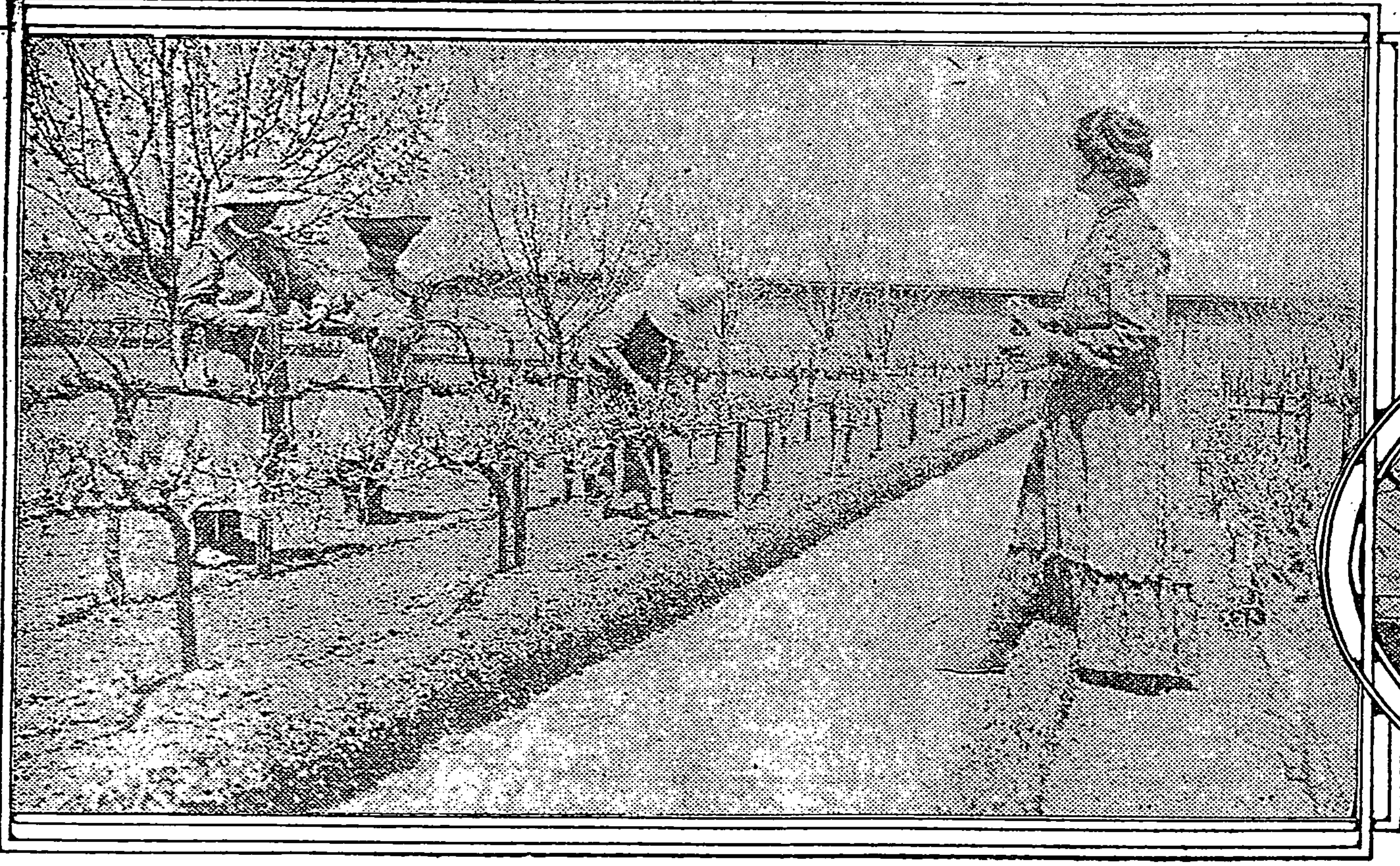


MRS. BELMONT TRAINING GIRLS TO BE AGRICULTURISTS

Nine of Them in Overalls Learning How to Become Farmers and Landscape Gardeners on Her Estate at Hempstead, and They Are Only the Advance Guard.



A Practical Lesson in Tree Agriculture.



The "Farmhouse."

WORKING ten hours a day, and dressed in blue jumpers, overalls, and cotton shirts, nine happy girls, gathered from various sections around New York, are forming the pioneer class of a school of agriculture which Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont is establishing, and intends to endow on her Brookholt estate at Hempstead, L. I.

There are numerous agricultural schools throughout the country, but they are connected mainly with colleges and other institutions. Mrs. Belmont's school, which she is laying out on 200 acres of her Hempstead place, is probably the only one of its kind in the United States.

It is her intention to give the girls who show aptitude and interest every opportunity, with the hope that, on leaving, they will be able to take positions as superintendents, or go still farther into the field of landscape gardening. And it is this brand of ambition and enthusiasm which makes the girls at Brookholt oblivious to aching muscles and cleated shoes, and brings a grin to their faces when you speak about the ten-hour day with an interrogation point in your eyes.

"What do we care about a ten-hour day?" exclaimed one as she sat on the veranda rail, a pair of very small hands endeavoring to fill a pair of very manly pockets. "We sleep like tops!"

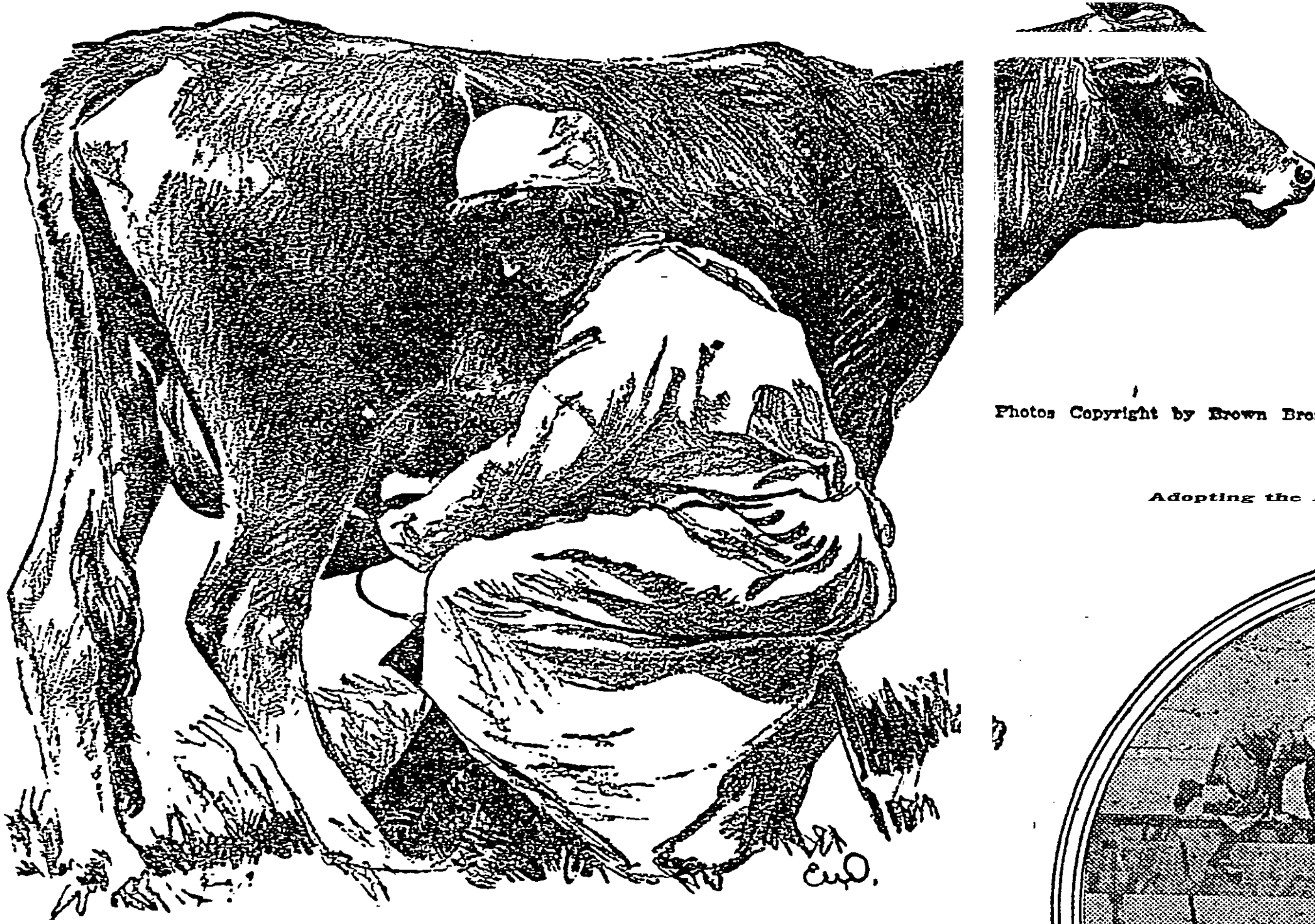
It was with the help of Duchene, the noted landscape gardener and architect, that Mrs. Belmont laid out the estate at Hempstead. With the exception of the French garden and the vegetable garden which Duchene did himself, and which are famous for their beauty and rarity, Brookholt is the result of its owner's brain and artistic eye.

She not only planned the land immediately about the house—with its terraced lawns, presided over by marble griffins, winding wood roads and a miniature lake in the heart of a miniature forest—but she personally presided over the work of execution. Long before the place was habitable numerous were the stories told by the folk of the surrounding countryside of how she walked in the fields, in the blazing sun, and directed the laborers in the work of developing her ideas until they became crystallized into realities. Oakdale, the country place of her son, William K. Vanderbilt, Jr., at Lakeview, L. I., was also laid out by Mrs. Belmont.

"It seems as though my idea of a farm for women has dated from the time I can remember anything," said Mrs. Belmont, as she sat looking out of one of the long French windows in a reception room at Brookholt a few days ago. From the window the lawn could be seen stretching away, in rich green carpeting, to the deep fringe of woodland which skirts the estate. The view was eclipsed for the instant as a Turk, in native costume, passed across the veranda with a dish of food for a sleek and haughty looking bulldog.

"I have always believed in it," went on Mrs. Belmont, "always wanted it. And now that the school is started I intend that the land shall never be sold, that it shall always remain what it is—a school of agriculture for women. I intend to endow it, and when all the land about is built up and Uniondale is a thriving town this tract of 200 acres will remain exactly what it is to-day—though larger and always progressive, I hope—in the centre of the community.

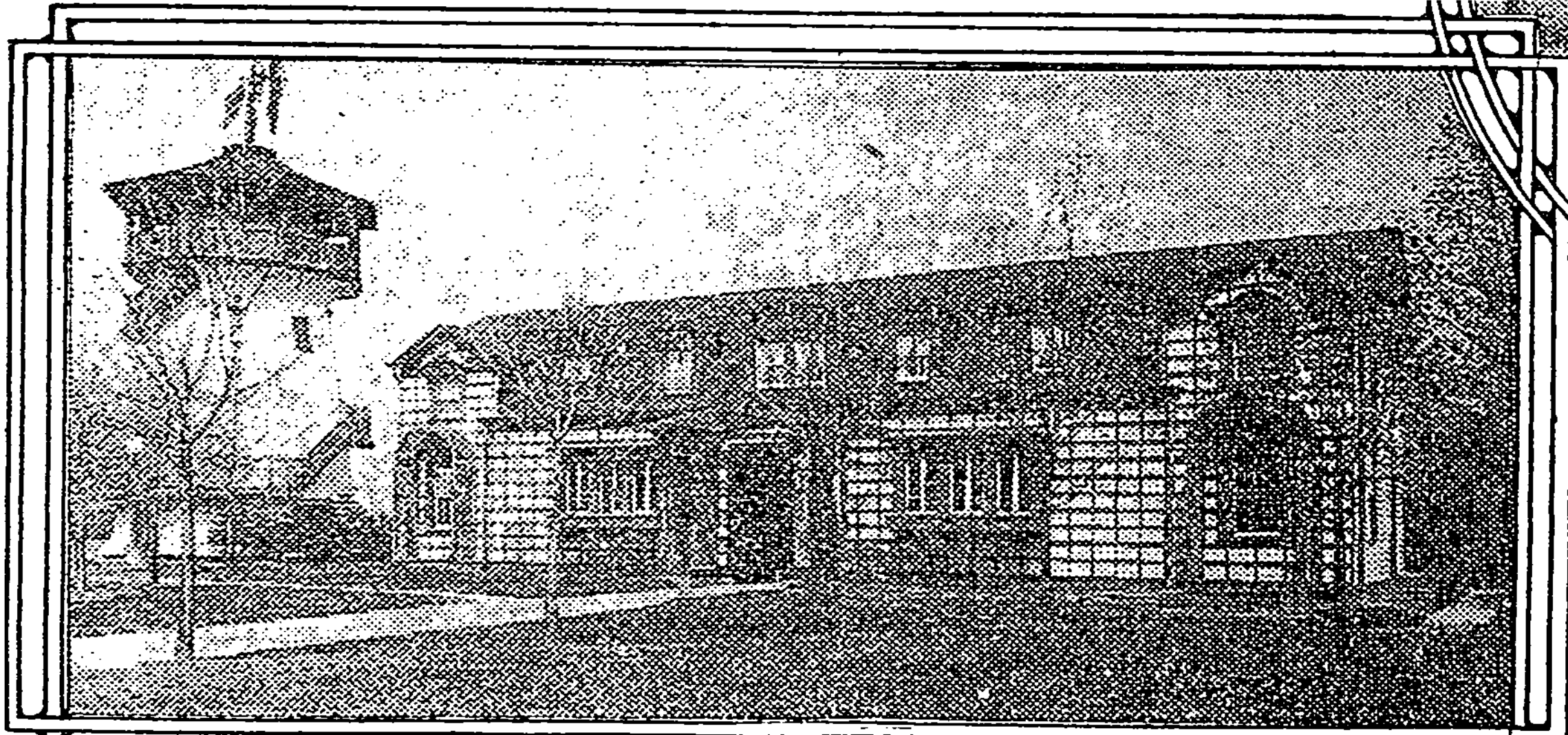
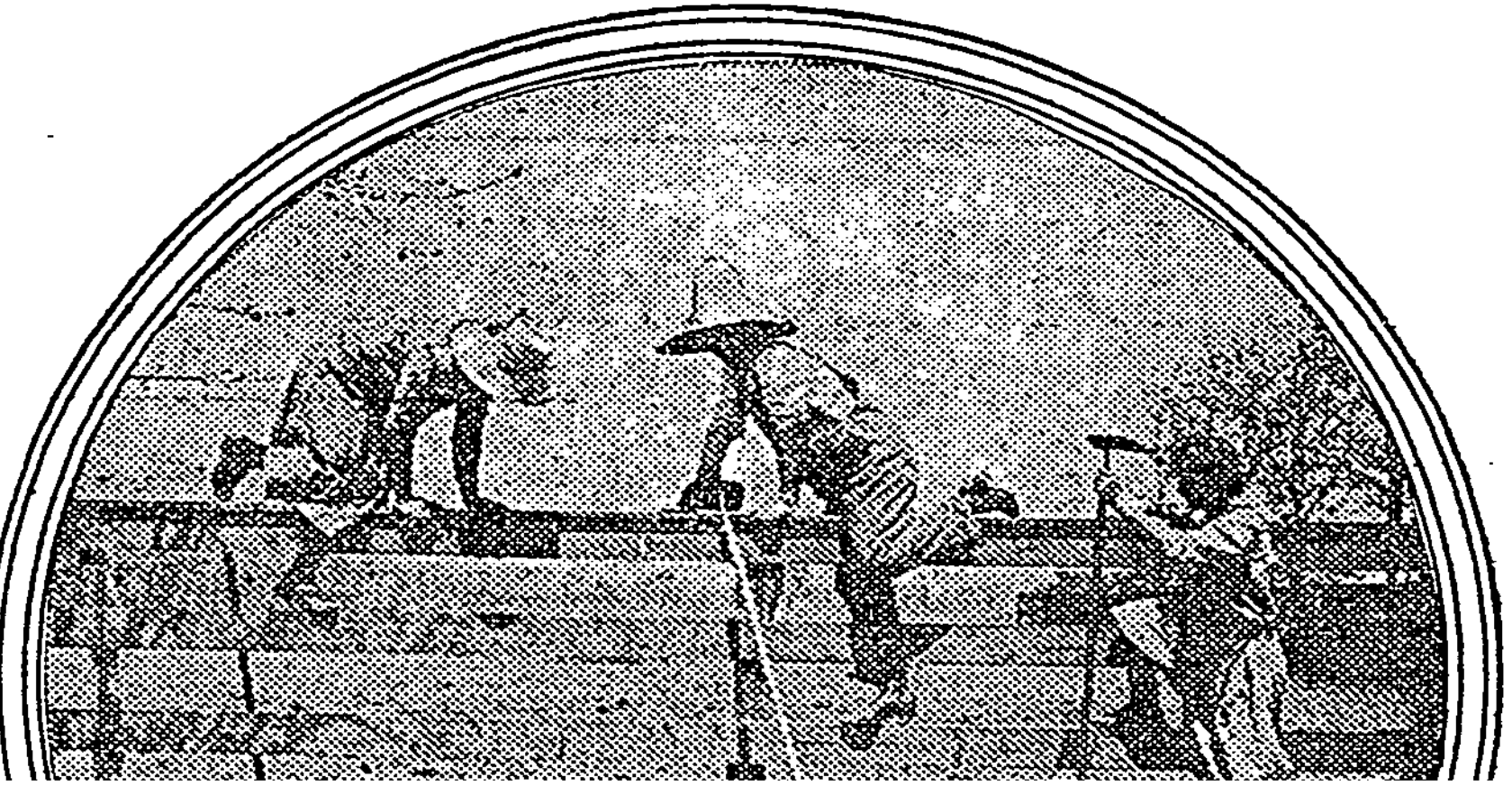
"I have always been keenly interested in farming and landscape gardening, myself, you know, but I always seem to have had the greatest amount of difficulty in getting the right kind of men to do the work for me. When Brookholt was being



Going Amilking.

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Adopting the Man's Method of Fence Climbing.



Where the Workers Live.

laid out several years ago, and I undertook its personal supervision, though I had the greenest kind of Polacks, raw Irish and German immigrants laboring under me. I hadn't the slightest trouble with them. This confirmed the belief I have always held, that there was a vocation that women could succeed in equally with men, and not only succeed in, but find tremendously interesting as well.

"I have started the school with only a small number to begin with, as we are not prepared for more just at present. The outside work is in charge of Mrs. Laura D. Williams, a scientific farmer who comes from Philadelphia.

"Every night the girls make their report of the day's work in a diary which they keep. This includes what they have done throughout the day, the methods followed in each case, the condition of the soil they found, and, in short, every detail



At Work with the Hoe.

of plowing, planting, sowing or reaping.

"Then, when they leave the school and start out for themselves, these diaries will have been converted into the most valuable text-books, for they will be chronicles not only of what is right to do, theoretically, in different instances, but they will also stand a record of the actual experience encountered in developing the theories, in each case.

"There is no reason why women should not make clever and astute farmers, providing they know their subject thoroughly and are interested in it. Women who are at the head of beautiful country homes in England take far more interest in their grounds and houses than the women in this country. Here, we leave the work quite to outsiders to whom we pay a big price to do the work, and not bother us, until it is done. Whereas the wives of country gentlemen abroad demonstrate the keenest personal interest in the development of everything that goes on about their estates. It is really beautiful work and when has not beautiful work appealed especially to women?"

Mrs. Jacobina Levy, who formerly was in charge of the Annex of the Sheltering and Guardian Society, of which Dr. Ludwig Bernstein is Superintendent, at Fifty-fifth Street near Amsterdam Avenue, is in charge of the inside work of the farm.

The 200 acres on which the new school is situated lies on a part of the Brookholt estate across the main highway from that on which the Belmont house is located. Bounded by Fulton Avenue, Front Street, and what is known as Whalecock Avenue, it includes many acres of plowed fields, pasture, and woodlands.

The chief feature of interest is the famous winter garden, a house built entirely of glass. A long driveway, lined by

room, baths, and a shower. The second story has been broken up into extra sleeping-rooms.

To return to the main farmhouse: a small reception-room off the old-fashioned hall, with its winding stairway, in distinct contrast to the big kitchen, with its rows of plates hanging on the walls giving quite a Dutch effect—and something on the sideboard which was suggestive of no "effect" in the world that belongs exclusively to any particular country. It was oostard ple.

Each bedroom is of good size, contains twin cots, and is decidedly quaint with the low eaves which slope down to the windows. Looking from these one gets an excellent view of the surrounding

to have the effect of a short skirt. A big hat was turned back off her face, and she carried a hoe.

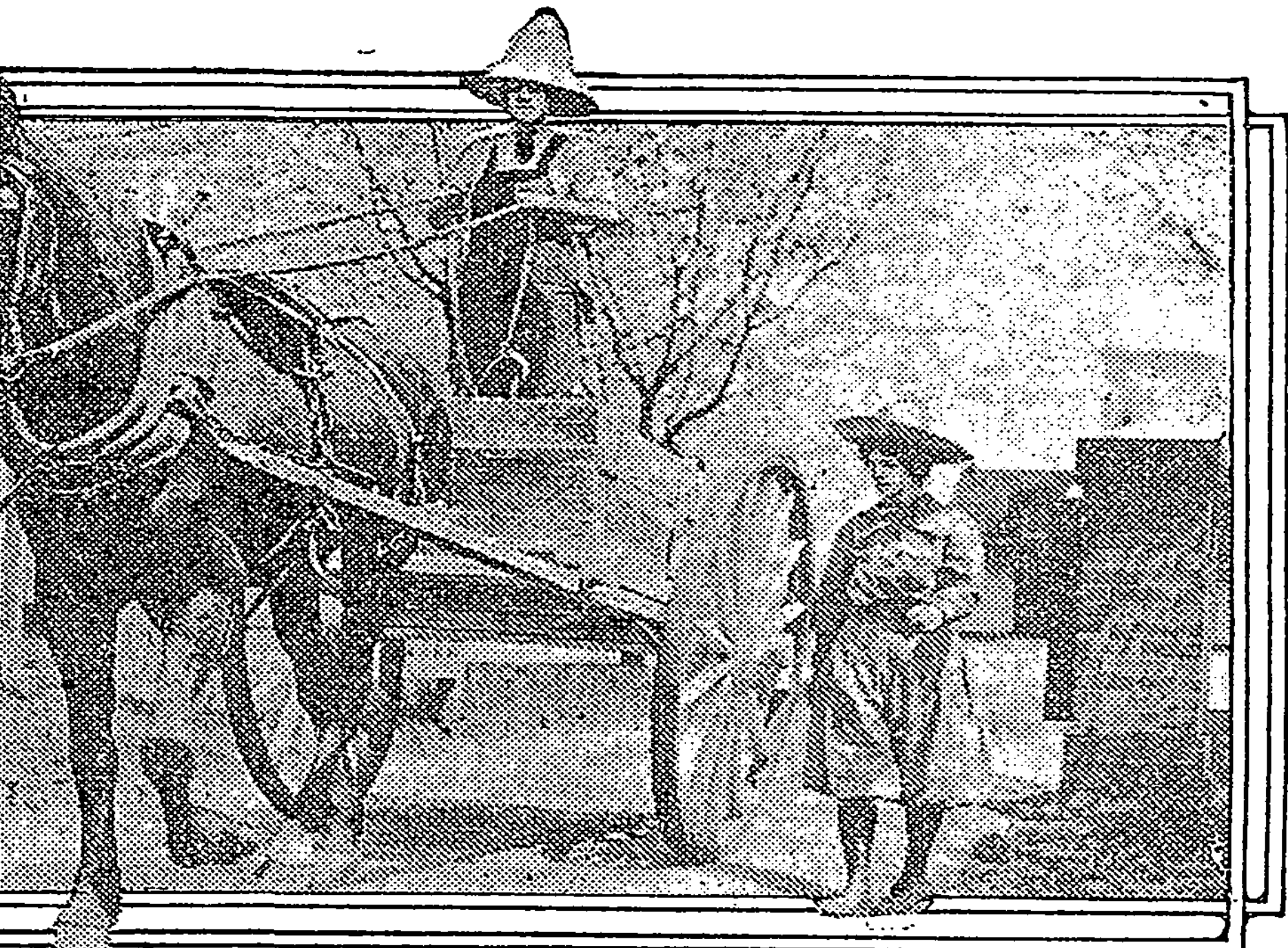
Skipping along behind her, Grandmother-Hippity-Hop fashion, came Lenora (she asked the reporter to leave out her full name until she got to be a noted landscape gardener)—came Lenora, in overalls. Like the rest, she wore a big straw, poked farmer's hat, and tied about her throat was a carelessly knotted bandanna.

Some of the girls wore cotton handkerchiefs tied around their hats. As they trotted around the house into the courtyard and dropped in a breathless group on the porch, with the arbor and clambering vines for a setting, they looked as though they had been taken off some stage on Broadway and brought out into the country expressly for an out-of-door play.

They had not long to rest, however, for Mrs. Williams had already started for the field where they were to finish planting the corn before the rain set in. Harassing Philadelphia, a slow and steady farm horse, to a farm cart, the girls piled in and drove down the road which led to the fields. Ahead of them could be seen the lithe, energetic figure of Mrs. Williams, driving Thousand Dollars and guiding a harrow.

When they reached the field where the planting was to be done they jumped out and gathered around the bag of phosphate, while the cart went on to another field where it was to be put in use. Immediately they were joined by Mrs. Williams, the bags were opened and the girls were sent over the field, whitening the upturned earth, with the fertilizer as they went. The wet corn was then made ready in palls, a pall slung over the shoulder of each girl and they started down the rows, following the plow.

"How many droppers ahead of thee?" called out Mrs. Williams to a girl who stood irresolute, as to which row to select.



Off to the Fields.

"Two," answered the pupil promptly.

"Then, they'll take the third row, will they not?" asked the Quaker farmeress, settling the question.

"How long have I been farming?" resting her hands on her hips, but with keen gaze fixed always on the workers. "I

was born on a farm and I have done little else all my life.

"Yes, I think the school will succeed. These see that the idea is not only to teach farming, as they do in the colleges, but to carry along the work right with it.

"It would be hardly likely that the course of training could be finished in less than a year, though there is to be no fixed rule as to that. It will depend entirely on the aptitude of the student. But it would hardly be worth while for them to learn the preparation of the crops for the ground and then to leave before they knew how to care for them, after they are taken out of the ground. In all it takes about twelve months to get a complete conception of everything that is to be done.

"We expect to have this season sixteen acres of field corn and four acres of sweet corn and nine acres of potatoes, as well as spinach, beets, rhubarb, carrots, radishes, asparagus, tomatoes, and every vegetable you can think of. We are already having asparagus and spinach from our own growing.

"Later, when the time comes, we are to run a motor truck in to New York to mark the school, in the superior intelligence of all the girls. Marked refinement is the stamp which the class carries, and a certain alertness and surety of purpose which does not belong to the girl who has picked up a new project simply for a lark.

"How did you happen to come here?" one of the girls was asked.

"I read about it in the papers," she replied. "As I want to be a landscape gardener, I decided this would be a good beginning, and wrote Mrs. Belmont. I received application blanks, and later was sent for to be interviewed.

"Of course, you know, you have to be physically fit before you can even qualify. Then they talk to you, ask you all sorts of questions, and, in other words, generally size you up. If you look to be a likely candidate, and there is room for you, you are notified to come out."

One of the brightest girls in the school is deaf and dumb, though she holds a college certificate.

From the time they arrive at Brookholt the girls are given two months' probation. If they prove sufficiently able, strong, and interested to go on with the work they proceed, at sixteen dollars a month.

Their schedule for the day begins at 5 A. M., when Mrs. Levy arises and sets the machinery of the house in motion. The rising gong is sounded at 6 A. M., and breakfast is served at 6:30.

At 7 o'clock they start out in the fields, and do not return until 12 o'clock, the dinner hour. At 1 o'clock they again start out, and do not come back until 5. A hearty supper is then served, and the evening is spent in talking over the day's work and the writing of the diaries.

The final ceremony of the day's actual work is the milking of the cows. Covered from head to foot with white gowns, the girls take turns at playing milkmaid each night.

After the diaries are written they tur



After the Day's Work.

orderly rows of maple trees, leads directly from the street to the farmhouse. Gabled windows peer out from under a sloping roof, to the very shingles of which vines have clambered along the corners of the house. The house itself, with a veranda running its entire length, faces a big gravelled courtyard, across the way from which is a long line of neatly kept stables.

On the south end a road leads out to the fields and pastures, while the north end of the courtyard looks out toward the garden. On the other side of the house, which is approached by the driveway, with its lines of maple trees like sentries on duty, is the lawn and a prim, gravelled walk which takes one to a long, low building with an old-fashioned windmill at the end.

This was once used as a garage, but has now been converted into a recreation place for the girls. A big room on the main floor will be devoted entirely to this purpose. Adjoining it is a cloak-

country, with the formal gardens of Brookholt divided from the Hempstead Plains by not more than a strip of country road. Here and there out of a group of trees may be seen the chimneys of many homes of residents of the Meadow Brook colony, backed in the far distance by the blue line of Wheatley Hills.

Ample opportunity had been given to inspect the farmhouse and other buildings about the school the other day, but not a glimpse had the visitors yet had of the women farmers about whom so much interest and curiosity has been expressed.

Just as the question of their whereabouts was skaping itself there came a laugh from the direction of the winter garden, then a sound of voices in concert, and, peering from one of the upper windows, we caught sight of a group of girls trotting down the garden walk.

The woman in the lead, who proved to be Mrs. Williams, wore a blue print blouse and bloomers that were so full as