

DICTATIONS

Cleaning the Sheep

Nicholas lay on his back on the hill-side, gazing up into the young leaves of an oak tree. He was hot and dirty, and it was good to stretch his full length in the shade. All round him from hills far and near came the bleating of sheep – the high anxious cry of lambs and the deeper reassuring answer of the ewes. Farther away he could hear the voices of the village children. Since early morning Nicholas had been helping with the sheep-washing. It was fun pushing the silly sheep one by one off the plank into the river and with long poles making them swim some way down stream before they were allowed to scramble out onto clean pasture. He liked working with the men, Giles the shepherd, and Colin, and Tom, and above all with Hal, the shepherd's son, who was his best friend.

Cynthia Harnett, *The Merchant's Mark*

Golden Springtime

"Everything shines – shines – like gold," Gretel sang.

Yes, everything seemed golden. The sunlight twinkling through the young leaves of the trees turned them into gleaming lace, and the meadows along the way were yellow with buttercups. Even the fields of spring grain caught the golden light of that May day.

Along the road, the houses, too, were trimmed with delicate sprays of green and bunches of purple and white lilacs. The windows were bright with pansies, petunias, forget-me-nots, and crimson geraniums.

Virginia Olcott, *Karl and Gretel*

Grandmother's Cottage Garden

When my father took us to England, I realized that my grandmother's garden had been, in fact, a glorified cottage garden. The small front yards in the English villages are crowded with flowers from the gate to the front wall. They are like the gardens you see on calendars. There are no two alike. These are gardeners' gardens where every whim can be indulged, where you do not have to work out color schemes or planting plans, where herbs and flowers, vegetables and fruit grow happily together. They are the perfect gardens for beginners.

Janet Gillespie

First Signs of Spring

Winter began to pass, and signs of spring were everywhere, in the brilliance of the blue sky across which the round white clouds blew, then in the swelling red buds of the maple trees that were like beads when you looked up at them.

V. Olcott