

Commended

- *My Curious Plague of Flowers*
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My Curious Plague of Flowers

In the voice of Ellis Rowan (1848-1922)

By the winter lake I will write the death-date of
hawk-moths and botanists on swamp bark.

Twice, I count my father's giant Himalayan cedars.
The mouth of a cloud opens, our house disappears.

A wind throws darts into eyes of pigmy bats.
Barmy as the spotted orchids, I paint by candle light.

Quiet! The earth-scratch of creatures, the ten legs
of insects climbing the summit of my easel-rock.

Catkins hang like old cobwebs from pandanus.
Why is dew like sorrow-frost on the infant fern?

Here, there are no blank pages. Mud travels up
my trawling hem, creeps into sketch-book seams.

Watch a flesh-eating mist madden the air. Why must
fish leap, the swamp impart, swallows seldom return?

Decades of nets and nests. Yet, I keep my appointments
with spores and petioles, invite the untremble of leaves.