

Grey mould

A tired man nods his white head over nursery invoices:
records of a patient plantsman, tending his obsession,
sending specimens in wooden crates and straw,
dispersed hopefully to other gardeners, by rail; fame
in a name, a variety, an unorthodox petal, a leaf.
In his Bible, the last 'Louisa', pressed and dried long since,
bookmarking lost hybrids, doing what galantamine does,
easing the memory of more prolific days. Once,
a hundred cultivars huddled under whitewashed glass;
now, from his window, he can see panes and benches
wrecked by botrytis, the cold stove chimney, old brackets
for crowded rows of slatted shelves, gone for firewood.

Not all memory fails as he nurses 'Merlin' and 'Magnet':
the last of his milk-flower children, nodding white heads.

John Baylis Post, Castletownbere, Republic of Ireland