

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Winter*

Article 29

1970

A Failure

Wendell Berry

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Recommended Citation

Berry, Wendell. "A Failure." *The Iowa Review* 1.1 (1970): 100-100. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1028>

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Two Poems by Wendell Berry

The Illumination of the Kentucky
Mountain Craftsman, Chester Cornett

Alone, he has come to the end
of the handing down of his art,
the time having little use
for such skill as his, his land
seeded with lies and scars.
So much has he suffered
in his flesh that the end of time,
the signs being fulfilled,
the unsealing of the seals,
seems only to be borne
as he has borne the rest.
On the mountain top, stunning
him like the glance of God,
the lightning struck him. Entering
at the big tendons of his wrists,
it has stayed in his body
so that the insects no longer
bite him, and in the night
he is not afraid any more.

A Failure

They are gone, the wild
lilies that stood here in the years
past. For the loss of meeting them
again, I am less. Will they return
next year? Will I? I needed
to find them here, unfailing,
in balanced, tensed, mottled, airy,
proud vibrance of ash.