

1970

# A Failure

Wendell Berry

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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.