

The saddest lament in Oliver Wendell Holmes's poems is for the voiceless,

for those who never sing,  
But die with all their music in them.

The extracts which I have read show Dr. Bassett to have been a man of more than ordinary gifts, but he was among the voiceless of the profession. Nowadays environment, the opportunity for work, the skirts of happy chance carry men to the summit. To those restless spirits who have had ambition without opportunities, and ideals not realizable in the world in which they move, the story of his life may be a solace. I began by saying that I would tell you of a man of whom you had never heard, of a humble student from a little town in Alabama. What of the men whom he revered, and for whom in 1836 he left wife and children? Are they better known to us? To-day scarcely one of those whom he mentions touches us with any firmness from the past. Of a majority of them it may be said, they are as though they had not been. Velpeau, Andral, Broussais, the great teachers whom Bassett followed, are shadowy forms (almost as indistinct as the pupil), dragged out to the daylight by some *laudator temporis acti*, who would learn philosophy in history. To have striven, to have made an effort, to have been true to certain ideals—this alone is worth the struggle. Now and again in a generation, one or two snatch something from dull oblivion; but for the rest of us, sixty years—we, too, are with Bassett and his teachers, and

No one asks  
Who or what we have been,  
More than he asks what waves,  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost ocean, have swelled,  
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.