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ROBERT LOVEMAN: BELATED ROMANTICIST

BY

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Nor am I less grateful to those members of the English faculty of the University of Alabama who have in their various capacities assisted my work, especially so to Dr. Barnwell, who has given me valuable aid, and to Professor Elizabeth Coleman, who as director of this thesis has continually and unselfishly given both sympathetic advice and material help. I would also like to thank Dr. Hard of Tulane, Mr. Fidler, Dr. Moore, and Dr. Sandidge for their assistance and encouragement.

Helen Friedman

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ROBERT LOVEMAN: BELATED ROMANTICIST

## FOREWORD

Fate bestows the gift of immortality according to a strange and inexplicable plan. Boccaccio lives, not for his masterly Genealogia Deorum,<sup>1</sup> on which he spent intermittently thirty years, but for a collection of amusing tales; Charles Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, didactic professor of mathematics, almost humorless in his relations with the world,<sup>2</sup> is remembered for a whimsical nonsense story; Pepys is known today, not for his unceasing labors as secretary of the admiralty, the work to which he devoted the greater part of his energies, but for a playfully written diary of his social life. And Robert Loveman, if he lives at all, will live for a few simple lines to a rainy day. A trick of the popular fancy has singled out his "Rain Song"<sup>3</sup> from all the poems in the "silent squadron" of his ten little volumes, slowly bound for "Lethe wharf".

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1. The preface and the fourteenth and fifteenth books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum were recently translated by Charles G. Osgood.
  2. Woolcott, Alexander, introduction to Modern Library edition of Alice in Wonderland.
  3. Loveman, Robert, "Rain Song", Verses, (complete), p. 3.

This "Rain Song" was reprinted literally hundreds of times. Schirmer's, the best-known music house in New York, published many musical versions of it,<sup>1</sup> and a popular singer in Carnegie Hall repeated it five times as an encore during one evening's concert.<sup>2</sup> John Burroughs, a close personal friend of Loveman's asked that it be read at his own funeral.<sup>3</sup> Even today, when most of Loveman's poetry lies mouldering away on dusty book-shelves, this one song has kept a flickering memory of him alive.

The work of this unassuming Georgia poet is, it is true, subject in varying degree to most of the vices of his literary period -- the dashing, sentimental nineties and the early nineteen hundreds. However, H. L. Mencken, whose vitriolic anger is so often directed at much greater poets, is singularly gentle in the following letter criticizing Loveman's early work:

"I can see Dobson in it, of course,--every poet showed a touch of Dobson in the early 'nineties,-- but I also see Herrick and Carew and Waller and Suckling in it. . . You show no trace whatever of bawling Romanticism. Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, in music and in poetry!"<sup>4</sup>

Such high praise for an almost forgotten poet and from a critic so sparing of kind words, sounds a little strange

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1. Harben, Will N., letter to Loveman, October 11, 1906.
  2. Harben, Will N., letter to Loveman, January 2, 1909.
  3. DeLoach, R. J. H., letter to Loveman, November 20, 1921.
  4. Mencken, H. L., letter to Loveman, undated.

to us now, but similar compliments to Robert Loveman were not infrequent during his lifetime. As a personality, he was whimsical and charming, always an individual in an age when mass-thinking and standardization were the rule. Like Lanier, he was "a melodious worshipper of beauty, born into an age of crass materialism".<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, Loveman was usually a mere imitator of departed literary lights, a follower of an outworn romantic tradition that had almost no significance in his own industrial era. In his unobtrusive way, he upheld the discarded theories of a bygone age, "the idealism of the forties, the romanticism of the fifties".<sup>2</sup> He was popular with the masses, who delighted in the simplicity and prettiness of his verses, and he was enthusiastically received by such men as Israel Zangwill,<sup>3</sup> James Whitcomb Riley,<sup>4</sup> William Dean Howells,<sup>5</sup> John Burroughs,<sup>6</sup> and the young Don

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1. Blankenship, American Literature, p. 430.
  2. Parrington, V. L., The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America, p. 97.
  3. Zangwill, Israel, "marked by restraint of handling, delicacy of touch, and a brevity that would have pleased Poe", article in Cosmopolitan (quoted as a press comment for Loveman's Verses, published 1896).
  4. Riley, James Whitcomb, "I think it a most worthy and delightful volume" (quoted on advertising folder as a press comment for Loveman's Gates of Silence, 1903).
  5. Howells, William Dean, "fresh, new and graceful" (quoted on advertising folder for Loveman's Verses, published 1896).
  2. Burroughs, John "The Author's previous work, especially . . . The Gates of Silence, in which occurs that exquisite lyric, "Rain Song", . . . stamps him as a poet of unusual merit", foreword to Loveman's Sonnets of the Strife, published 1917).

Marquis.<sup>1</sup> The best magazines of the day solicited contributions from him;<sup>2</sup> school-children wrote adoring letters; his concert-recitals often drew large crowds of admirers and were everywhere reported to be excellent entertainment.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this thesis, however, is not to "stir a little dust of praise" that would soon settle down again into oblivion. Its purpose is to present an accurate record of the life and work of a gentle and lovable man who, if for no other reason, is significant because he is typical of a vast group of belated romanticists who made the mistake of following the old, well-worn paths rather than cutting new trails of their own.

Two other theses have been written on Robert Loveman, one at the University of Georgia, in 1927, and the second at Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee. Copies of these were not available to the author, but from the chapter headings it is evident that neither paper restricted its field to the detailed study of Loveman's life and works. Both are general treatments of his poetry, with

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1. Marquis, Don, enthusiastic review of Loveman's Poems, published 1893, in Atlanta Journal, March 21, 1893.
  2. Mencken, H. L., "We want something of yours in the Smart Set every month or two", letter to Loveman, January 5, 1905. McClure's, "We want more of your delightful poems", letter to Loveman, March 21, 1893.
  3. Brunswick News, "He charmed and delighted a crowded house", January, 1913 (clipping from Loveman's scrap-book).

an accompanying biographical sketch. Moreover, a great deal of the material used in the present work was not available to the authors of the aforementioned theses.

This material consists primarily of Robert Loveman's own letters and scrap-books, most of which are now in the possession of the Loveman family, and of anecdotes related to the author by relatives or intimate friends of the poet. A large assortment of letters was saved from destruction only by the foresight of a former neighbor of Loveman's, who rescued them from the debris left in the Loveman home, dismantled after Robert Loveman's death, and sent them to the poet's sister, Mrs. Linka Friedman. It is, therefore, with a realization of the perishable nature of all such private collections of letters that we are endeavoring here to present in detailed and complete form the main facts of Loveman's life and poetic development.

## Chapter I

### SHAPING INFLUENCES

On January 7, 1837, in the little village of Shomach, Hungary, was born Esther Schwartz, the mother to whom Robert Loveman was so devoted during his entire life. It was from her that he inherited his innate gentleness and cheerfulness of disposition, and from her scholarly father, Alexander Schwartz, who spoke fluently in Latin, Hebrew, German, and many Slavic dialects, that he inherited his poetic temperament.

While Esther was still a child, her family moved to the pretty town of Lichert. Here most of her girlhood was passed quietly and uneventfully, with her two older brothers, David and Morris, and her younger sister, Adele. It was after the death of her mother and her father's subsequent marriage to Fannie Frankle, that Esther took the step which was to dedice her future. An elderly cousin of her father's, a Mrs. Schwartz, decided to come to America, and Esther, with several other young girls, agreed to accompany her.

In Cleveland, Ohio, where Mrs. Schwartz made her home, Esther met the young merchant, David Robert Loveman, of Hungarian Jewish parentage like herself, who later be-

came her husband. Mr. Loveman had divorced a former wife in Hungary, where he had made a living by tutoring Hebrew, and, leaving his daughter, Ethel, with her mother, he had come to America accompanied by his young son, Phillip. After his marriage to Esther Schwartz, the couple remained for a few years in Cleveland, where Esther's sister and her father, with his second wife, soon joined them. There, in 1864, Robert Loveman was born.

Though Cleveland was his birthplace, Dalton, Georgia,

"the little town with its long street of shops running north and south, and its homes crowding towards the western hills",<sup>1</sup>

was his first playground, for it was here that the Lovemans finally settled, with the nine-months-old Robert and his older sister, Linka. In a few years the Loveman clothing store had become one of the leading stores in Dalton, and the enterprising father had established his family in "The Robin's Nest", as Robert Loveman later called his home, a roomy, wide-porched cottage set in a grove of oak trees on a hill-slope, far back from the quiet street. Here, two years later, another son, Morris, was born; a third, Louis, in 1868; and a fourth, Sam, in 1870. A second daughter, Annie, was born in 1876, and a last son, Berthold,

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1. Carter, Mrs. William W., The Southern Literary Magazine, August, 1923, (quoted from clipping in Loveman's scrap book).

in 1880.

On the wide, grassy lawn of the Loveman home, with the Bard lawn adjoining on one side and that of the Manly family on the other, the boy Robert played with his younger brother, Morris, and the other children of the neighborhood, while Mrs. Loveman, kindly and pleasant, busy with her crocheting or her needle-work, often watched them from the vine-covered porch. Many years later an old friend wrote Loveman:

"I shall never forget that as a very small boy the Bard and Manly and Loveman yards were a happy hunting ground, nor shall I forget your mother's kindnesses to all of us as youngsters. She was always broad and generous and lovable, and memories of her are particularly associated with my earlier days."<sup>1</sup>

The beautiful old town square, to which a faint atmosphere of mystery and glamour still clung, was another early playground. There the Presbyterian Church of Dalton, destroyed in the Civil War, was being rebuilt, and there, too, in war time, a negro slave had been hanged for treachery. This last fact must have been of gruesome significance to the children as they played at "I Spy" or "Soldiers and Prisoners". Perhaps even in these childhood days Robert Loveman was beginning to absorb some of the dreamy, melancholy romanticism of the Old South that was later

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1. Jones, T. R., letter to Loveman, November 21, 1921.

manifest everywhere in his poetry. The shady streets and ante-bellum homes of Dalton breathed of a glorious past that not even the poverty-stricken days of Reconstruction could banish from memory.

However, a more significant influence upon Loveman than the pervasive romanticism of the South was that of the German culture in his own home. For the atmosphere of the Loveman home was German rather than Southern. Robert's mother and father had brought with them from the old country a rich cultural tradition. They worshipped at the shrines of the great German romanticists, Goethe, Heine, and Schiller; and Robert Loveman, who early displayed a love for reading, learned to reverence the literary idols of his parents. He longed for the day when he could translate into English the cramped German script of the old volumes his mother had brought with her from Hungary. English remained a foreign language to both Mrs. Loveman and her husband, although they spoke it almost exclusively in their home for the sake of the children.

Indeed, in this household everything was done for the children's comfort and happiness. Mrs. Loveman was a typical German housewife, busy, scrupulously tidy, and renowned for her cooking. She was, moreover, a lover of the fine old music of the German composers. From Robert's earliest days she encouraged and guided his appreciation

of music, an appreciation which later revealed itself in the lilting word-music of his poetry. In the following stanzas, composed in his most sentimental style, he afterwards paid tribute to his mother's "gentle songs":

"When I, an infant, peaceful lay  
 Upon my loving Mother's breast,  
 She softly sung me, night and day,  
 Sweet lullabies of faith and rest.

Through all my youth, through all my years,  
 Her gentle songs have followed me,  
 The tender fountain of my tears  
 Leaps up at their dear melody.

So all my days are days of song,  
 And when shall come my life's eclipse,  
 A happy fate, to drift along  
 To death with songs upon my lips."<sup>1</sup>

Robert Loveman was a merry, fun-loving child, with an inexhaustible imagination. Morris was his constant playmate, except when the companionship of older boys was available. In the latter case, as is the sad fate of most little brothers, poor Morris would be deserted for the "gang". To make his exclusion more absolute, Robert invented a secret language, the key to which was known to everyone but Morris. Only one vestige of this lost language remains, -- the mysterious words, "Sif sof wix"! Interpreted, they mean, "Run away from Morris". Long afterwards Robert Loveman wrote them on the fly-leaf in Morris' copy of his first book of poems.

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Song", Verses, (complete), p. 73.

At the age of seven, Robert became a bare-foot school-boy in a two-roomed school-building, where the girls were taught in one room by Miss Laura Kelley, and the boys in the other by Dr. John Bitting. Dr. Bitting was a fine old gentleman but, like most school-masters of the day, he had no scruples against using the whip. Moreover, he had a son, Paul, whom the other pupils heartily disliked. One day Robert Loveman had the misfortune to break Paul Bitting's front tooth with a rock, and for this unlucky act of impulse received a severe lashing. He is said to have endured his punishment in true Eton fashion.

Robert, indeed, seems to have had more than his share of school-room tortures, for not long afterwards, an even greater humiliation fell to his lot. It was the custom of Dr. Bitting to make his pupils "speak a piece" every day. Now the doctor had formed a peculiar aversion to Mrs. Hemans's "Casabianca", better known by its familiar first line, "The boy stood on the burning deck". With this fact in mind, his mischievous pupils plotted to vex him by one and all repeating, on the following day, the detested poem. Accordingly, when the next recitation time arrived, Dr. Bitting was regarded with ill-suppressed giggles as the first pupil rose and chanted soulfully the familiar words. But Dr. Bitting glared evilly and spoke

not a word. Another and another boy, each more nervous than the last, repeated the hated poem. When the tenth boy had finished, the enraged teacher could stand it no longer.

"The next boy who recites that poem", he roared, "will get the worst licking I ever gave!"

The next boy was Robert Loveman. What could he do? On one side was Dr. Bitting; on the other, the anxious faces of his friends. He had sworn not to fail them. Slowly and tremblingly he arose. Once more the heroic words rang out, but this time with a bitter significance, "The boy stood on the burning deck".<sup>1</sup>

In 1876, when Robert was twelve, he went to school under Professor Coolidge in the Boys' Academy of Dalton. About this time a mysterious gang appeared in the little town. The members, answering to such appellations as "The Cut-throat Kid" and "Diamond Dick", were later revealed to be Bob Loveman and his friends. In secret dens and hide-outs they read the blood-curdling "Beadle Books", obtainable for a dime at the corner "News Depot" of Ben Gudger. The exploits of "Wild Bill Hickok, with forty notches on his gun", and the daring brigandage of Jesse James were their envy and delight.

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1. Related to author by Morris Loveman.

His school-books, though he regarded them as considerably less important than the "Beadle Books" at this stage of his mental development, were by no means completely neglected. At the end of his second year in the Boys' Academy, Bob Loveman, to the surprise of all, and to the great envy of his brother Morris, was awarded the medal for delivering the best commencement oration. Robert was not considered nearly so good a speaker as Morris. Already, however, he was beginning to show evidences of the charm of manner and originality of thought which set him a little apart from the other boys of Dalton.

In this same thirteenth year, an event occurred which had great significance in determining the future course of Robert Loveman's life. His father took him out of school. The Loveman's clothing store, now fairly prosperous, had become more than a one-man job, and Robert, as the oldest son, was compelled to give up his carefree schoolboy existence to become a book-keeper for his father. This was a cruel necessity to a boy who was eager to cultivate an already developing taste for literature. But David Loveman had no patience with his son's literary ambitions and, moreover, was determined to make a merchant of him.

Loveman's separation from his school friends, though it prevented him from getting a well-rounded edu-

cation, proved a benefit to him in several respects. Denied the companionship of boys his own age, he was forced to depend on himself for most of his amusement. When he could get off from work for an hour or so, he often took long walks alone over the low, wooded hills. And when business was dull in the store, he formed the habit of studying or reading. Poetry seems to have been his usual choice, even at this early age. Exactly when he began to scribble verses of his own is a matter of conjecture. Probably the first ones were ridiculous jingles such as the following, which was written in his fifteenth year and dedicated to Miss Lillian Carter:

"When I see my girl and I am with her,  
She is so gently playing on the zither".<sup>1</sup>

As Loveman grew to young manhood, a more important factor than home environment in shaping his development was his constant and prolific reading. He read widely and appreciatively in the works of both English and American poets, and nearly all his youthful poetic efforts are distinctly imitative. Wordsworth and the other great romantics of the nineteenth century; Browning and the pre-Raphaelites; "majestic Milton";<sup>2</sup> and Loveman's life-long favorite, Shakespeare, whose work he called

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1. Loveman, Robert, scrap-book.

2. Loveman, Robert, "In England", Verses, (complete), p. 64.

"The noblest monument of thought  
That man e'er builded up to God",<sup>1</sup>

are all echoed time and again even in his earliest verses.

Of the American poets, Poe and Whitman most decidedly influenced him, the former in poetic style, the latter in thought. More pronounced than any of the foregoing influences, however, was that of the belated Romanticist or "post-mortem" school of American poetry, a school to which Loveman himself undoubtedly belongs. During his youth, several of these poets, including Paul Hamilton Hayne, Father Ryan, and Richard Watson Gilder, were still writing. Others, like Thomas Bailey Aldrich and J. G. Holland, had retired into influential editorial positions. Following the old paths blazed a generation or more ago by the early American romanticists, they continued to propound ideas and theories that had long since ceased to be vital, and their poetry was dead because it was "a copied embellishment rather than an interpretation of life".<sup>2</sup>

Loveman's first efforts, then, are a blend of his assimilated reading. Probably without his being conscious of it, his poetry repeated in slightly altered form sentiments and ideas which originated the romantic poets of the past. The echoes from his contemporaries and immediate

1. Ibid.

2. Untermeyer, Louis, preface to New American Poetry, p. 13.

predecessors are most easily traceable. A lyric of Thomas Bailey Aldrich's, "Good-night", or one of Richard Watson Gilder's, "Once Only", both of which Loveman cut out for his scrap-book, must have suggested the absurdly alliterative "Serenade" quoted below:

"Good-night, the day has slipped to sleep;  
 Good-night, my love, good-night;  
 The stars are tears the heavens weep;  
 Good-night, my love, good-night.  
 Sweetness and beauty, goodness, grace,  
 And happiness are in thy face;  
 Where thou art, hallowed is the place;  
 Good-night, my love, good-night.

Good-night, once more upon my breast,  
 Good-night, my love, good-night;  
 My heart the haven, stay and rest;  
 Good-night, my love, good-night.  
 Sweetheart, my own, or ere I go,  
 Once more, -- dear love, I love thee so,  
 Once more -- O ecstasy of woe!  
 Good-night, my love, good-night".<sup>1</sup>

Exaggerated sentimentality, found everywhere in the poetry of the period, is rife throughout Loveman's early work. And inconsequential love affairs seem to have taken up the greater part of his time. He was very susceptible to amorous glances. At seventeen he was enamoured of Irene Barton, a demure little girl with long, smooth braids. A year later it was beautiful, blonde Arabella Horne, who lived in the big white house of her grandfather,

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Serenade", Verses, (complete), p. 28.

former governor Horne. Later still came merry, dark-eyed Georgia Parker. These maidens, each in turn, inspired him with such sentimental effusions as the following:

"Thy breasted billows rise and fall,  
 O breathing sea!  
 Some joy doth hold thy soul in thrall  
 Of ecstasy.

And so, my love, my life, my sweet,  
 Whate'er may be,  
 Thus should thy billowed bosom beat  
 At thought of me".<sup>1</sup>

Illustrative of the usual direction of Loveman's thoughts are the women's faces which he invariably drew on all his books and papers. Sometimes, when the book he was reading was conducive to dreaming or difficult to understand, there are as many as ten or twenty hastily sketched profiles on the margin of a single page. They appear also on his business ledgers, personal correspondence, and on the note-books in which he was accustomed to write poetry.

Besides his reading, another shaping influence on Loveman's development was his deep love for nature, a feeling that was strengthened by his intimate friendship with Will Harben, a tall, spare man who managed a store of his own in Dalton. Harben was ten years older than Loveman but since they had a common love for the out-of-

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Song", Verses, (complete), p. 45.

doors and a great distaste for the work in which they were both engaged, they formed the habit of going on long walks together. Often their destination was a pretty spring called Willowdale, three miles down the railroad track from Dalton, a spot which Loveman later commemorated in a little volume entitled On the Way to Willowdale.<sup>1</sup>

Harben also shared Loveman's love for literature, having himself a decided talent for writing. Sometimes they spent the afternoons or evenings studying German, for both were fond of the German classics. Loveman, moreover, was eager to be able to talk to his mother in her native tongue.

Though Loveman's feeling for nature was unquestionably sincere, his expression of it usually lacked originality. An admirer of the early American mystics, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, his poems merely reiterated their beliefs. Like them, he endowed natural phenomena with human qualities. Take for example the pleasant little quatrains, "March" and "April", published during his early book-keeping years:

#### MARCH

"Whither doth now this fellow flee  
With outstretched arms at such mad pace?  
Can the young rascal thinking be  
To catch a glimpse of April's face?"

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1. Published in 1912 by J. B. Lippincott Company.

## APRIL

"Maiden, thy cheeks with tears are wet,  
 And ruefully thine eyebrows arch;  
 Is't as they say, thou thinkest yet  
 Of that inconstant madcap March?"<sup>1</sup>

A "La France" rose he addressed as "patrician to thy  
 finger tips", and a sunset glowed when

"Some artist saint spilled all his paint  
 Adown the western sky".<sup>2</sup>

No vast reaches of oceans or mountains were needed "to  
 thunder wisdom down" to him, but "the drop of dew, the  
 living seed"<sup>3</sup> all whispered of Infinity.

Seldom is there a really original thought in all  
 the mass of his youthful verses. In many of them Love-  
 man used the device of grouping rhyming or alliterative  
 words together into stanzas that have no central thought  
 whatever, not even an idea borrowed from his wealth of  
 reading. Too often he made the mistake of considering  
 mere words poetry, as in the ridiculous stanzas below:

"Words, words, words  
 That bubble up from baby lips,  
 Or falter trembling forth when age  
 Upon the homeward journey slips  
 And stumbles; words that rise  
 In prayer like incense to the skies,  
 Words that light with love the page,  
 Words, words, words.

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1. Loveman, Robert, Verses, (complete), p. 53.
  2. Ibid, "A Sunset", p. 18.
  3. Ibid, "Faith", p. 48.

Words, words, words  
 That poets borrow from the birds,  
 Willing words that have been caught  
 To the bosom of a thought;  
 Words of honey, words of gall,  
 Words that hold the heart in thrall,  
 Words sublime that chime and rhyme,  
 Words, words, words".<sup>1</sup>

This device, however, was sometimes used with slightly better effect. Take for example another early poem, a sonnet on the names of Shakespeare's women, which also illustrates his adoration of England's master poet:

"Sweet are the names of Shakespeare's women, they  
 Like music melt upon the heart and ear;  
 First Juliet comes, then Beatrice draws near,  
 Perdita pure, and Lucrece chaste as day,  
 Dear Desdemona, she who loved the Moor,  
 There, poor Ophelia, and Cordelia here,  
 Whose voice was ever soft and low to Lear;  
 Rare Rosalind, the fair who reigned o'er  
 Orlando's soul in Arden, Portia wise,  
 And Jessica, who with an unthrift love  
 Ran far as Belmont; look your last now, eyes,  
 On maid Miranda, gentle as a dove.  
 These names and women out of Shakespeare's art,  
 Like sweetest music, sway the human heart".<sup>2</sup>

Once in a long while, a poem like "Niagara" belies the imitative note of the others and gives a gleam of promise for the future.

#### Niagara

"Some vast despair, some grief divine,  
 Doth vigil keep  
 Forever here; before this shrine  
 The waters weep.

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Methinks a God from some far sphere,  
 In sportive part,  
 In ages past wooed Nature here,  
 And broke her heart".<sup>1</sup>

Only faintly in his poetry, thrown in as parentheses, do we catch faint echoes of the world that lay beyond the quiet isolation of Dalton. One poem, it is true, cries out against the injustice of child labor:

"Shut them from the light of day,  
 Dividends, dividends;  
 Rob them of their youth and play,  
 Dividends, dividends;  
 Stunt and dwarf the coming race,  
 Flabby limb and bloodless face, --  
 A prison mill, the infant's place --  
 Dividends, dividends!

Steal their freedom and their joy,  
 Dividends, dividends;  
 Sacrifice the girl and boy,  
 Dividends, dividends;  
 Foolish, blind, impotent State,  
 Sowing dragon teeth of hate, --  
 Save thy nurslings from this fate --  
 Dividends! Dividends!"<sup>2</sup>

But this may as easily have been inspired by some popular poem, -- Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Children", for instance, as by the actual conditions themselves. The lines

"Politics, wars, and the tariff may go,  
 Little we reck how the fickle winds blow"<sup>3</sup>

gives the keynote to his habitual attitude towards existing evils and, indeed, towards all public questions. He simply

1. Loveman, Robert, "Niagara", *Verses*, (complete), p. 14.
2. *Ibid*, "The Labor of the Child", p. 225.
3. *Ibid*, "XXXIX", p. 155.

ignored them.

His life in Dalton seems, on the whole, to have been one of carefree indifference to all unpleasantness. He took part in all the social affairs of the younger crowd, among whom his originality and ability to entertain made him extremely well-liked. On one occasion he acted in an amateur theatrical production, Augustin Daly's then tremendously popular "Under the Gaslight", and is said to have given a creditable and amusing performance.

Robert Loveman never regarded book-keeping as his serious occupation. He scribbled poetry on the business ledgers, to the exasperation of his quick-tempered though honest-hearted father, and many times during the day, would slip off to Gudger's News Depot or to Harben's store. Great would be old David Loveman's dismay whenever he chanced to notice his mischievous son's absence. "Poet! Poet!" he would shout, running out on the sidewalk, --"poet" being the most contemptuous term he could apply to his runaway son. "Vere's de poet!" And Loveman would presently stroll nonchalantly back down the street as though nothing had happened.<sup>1</sup> In fact, very little had. Robert's services in the store were of a casual and unimportant nature, and his father soon decided, as Robert himself had known all along,

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1. Related to the author by T. N. Shope, December, 1931.

that his oldest son would never be a merchant.

Accordingly, when, following the example of his younger brother, Morris, Robert Loveman decided that he wanted to study law at the University of Alabama, he did not have as much opposition from his father as he had anticipated. Another reason for Mr. Loveman's acquiescence in Robert's wishes was that Sam Loveman was now old enough to be of use in the store, and, with his shrewd business ability, showed signs of developing into an excellent merchant.

In 1887, therefore, Loveman made ready to leave his childhood home. Linka Loveman had been married seven years before, at the age of eighteen, to Bernard Friedman, a prosperous merchant of Tuscaloosa; and the beautiful Colonial home of the Friedmans, with its quaint pleached hedges and old-fashioned formal rose garden, would be a pleasant environment in which Loveman could pursue his studies.

Will Harben having already planned to close his store and move to Boston for the winter, Loveman's deepest regret in leaving Dalton was the separation from his mother. She was the only member of his family who sympathized with his literary ambitions and encouraged him in his work. As practical and dependable as her poetic son was impractical, she had consistently relieved Loveman of all small home worries. When buttons came off, when poems were rejected,

or when his pocket-book was empty, he had only to turn to "Mama". Not until many miles lay between them did he fully realize how much he had depended on her for consolation and resourceful help.

However, Loveman soon came to regard the pretty town of Tuscaloosa, with its hospitable people, as his second home. Ostensibly engrossed in his law he really spent his time in his usual leisurely way, -- writing and reading poetry, drawing women's faces in all his books, and making new friends. This time it was vivacious, rosy-cheeked Marie Hill who held his affections, and he spent many agreeable afternoons reading his poetry to her in the tall pine-woods near her home.

Although the amount of law assimilated in this pleasant year could not have been very large, at the end of the school term Loveman felt that he was ready to practice. On a visit to Birmingham the following fall, he astounded Morris, who had now established himself in the profession, by the calm suggestion, "Say, Morris, let's make this firm Loveman and Loveman!"

"You practice law!" Morris exclaimed. "Why, you've only studied a year. You could never pass the Bar exam".

But Loveman's confidence was not in the least dampened by Morris's lack of enthusiasm. He calmly went on with his planning, though a few casual questions about the

nature of the examination were Morris's only clue to his brother's intentions. Opportunity soon came Loveman's way in the person of jovial old Colonel Tolliver, a veteran lawyer, who dropped by to pay Morris a visit and was, of course, introduced to Robert.

Now the colonel was a very worthy gentleman, but he was inordinately fond of drinking. At this particular time he was "a little jolly". Since Loveman himself was never the person to refuse a good "toddy", the liquor was brought out and passed around. In a few minutes Loveman and the colonel were talking like boon companions, and when the colonel finally left, late that night, he would gladly have gone out of his way to help such a fine, promising young man as Bob Loveman.

In a few days, the necessary arrangements having been made, Loveman went to the court-house to stand the Bar examination. At that time it was customary for the judge to appoint a committee of lawyers to question each candidate. As Colonel Tolliver had introduced Loveman, the colonel was appointed chairman of the committee which was to question him. The committee withdrew into an adjoining room, where the colonel motioned Loveman to a chair with a smile of recognition. "I'm pretty busy to-day," he said genially, mopping his wet forehead, for it was a hot September day, and the courtroom was miserably stuffy. "Have

you read any law, Loveman?"

Loveman knew his man. "No", he replied with an answering smile, "but I know a good many other things". This hit the colonel in exactly the right spot. He leaned back in his chair and roared with laughter. "You're competent to practice!" he exclaimed. And thus Robert Loveman became a full-fledged lawyer.<sup>1</sup>

The only vestige that now remains of his legal experience is a professional card bearing upon it the inscription, "Robert Loveman, Attorney at Law, Birmingham, Alabama", and dashingly adorned with women's profiles. Beyond this, there is no record, either of clients assisted or of time given to his profession. In fact, one is tempted to suspect Loveman of using his Bar certificate as a mere ruse to get an office of his own in which to compose his poetry.

At any rate, the law practice was short-lived, for in a few months Loveman was back in Tuscaloosa, taking life easy and passing the time in his old, happy-go-lucky way. Perceiving that he had no made a success of his law, Mr. Friedman, or "Uncle", as Loveman called him, offered him a place as assistant book-keeper in his office. The short intermission over, Loveman was soon back once more at his

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1. Related to author by Morris Loveman, January, 1932.

old job. This time he had friendly associates working with him, for Mr. Friedman kept three assistant book-keepers. Loveman made a real friend of one of them, Leon Schwartz, who afterwards became mayor of Mobile. With this likeable little fellow for company, he went on many pleasant walks and fishing trips. Altogether, this three years' stay in Tuscaloosa seems to have been both enjoyable and profitable.

One of Loveman's favorite diversions, typical of his romantic temperament, was that of carrying on correspondences with women he had never seen, or had seen, perhaps, only once or twice. To each of them he gave a name of his own.

Patty Thumb, pretty little artist of Louisville, Kentucky, whose paintings he had admired in art galleries, was his "Rose Woman", because she loved to paint roses. For over fifteen years they wrote to each other. Loveman occasionally sent poems or photographs along with his letters, and hers were often decorated with delicately tinted water colors. It was a whimsical, meaningless little flirtation. She liked the name he gave her.

"Your present to me of the name of 'Rose Woman' is very pretty. It comes, I suppose, as do those names we give the Ice-man and the Paper-man and the Vegetable-boy,--because they deal in such things."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Thumb, Patty, letter to Loveman, January 18, 1895.

Sometimes Patty would pretend to be jealous of his other women friends. She teased him, in answer to a poem he sent her,

"The first song is passionately beautiful.  
(So she has 'midnight hair'!)"<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes they discussed their mutual business, for she often illustrated his poems for him so that they could be used as gift cards.

Loveman wrote to her about his literary friends, about his life in Dalton and Tuscaloosa, and, later, about his delight with New York and with Europe. In return she told him of her artistic achievements and of her opinions about books, plays, and places. The letters were great fun to both of them, there is no doubt. But in spite of Patty's numerous attempts to make Loveman visit her, he never came. At times he pretended that he would, but Patty learned to put no faith in his promises and at last exclaimed in exasperation,

"I have learned not to expect you, even if you say positively that you intend to arrive".<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps already Loveman felt that his romantic dreams were usually far more enchanting than realities.

Another correspondent was the lovely school-girl, Elsie Wise, whom he met on a hurried visit to his brother

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1. Thumb, Patty, letter to Loveman, January 18, 1895.  
2. Ibid, June 6, 1897.

Sam, now living in Chattanooga. He teasingly called her "Princess Flavia", because she was tall and stately like a princess. Her fresh, happy letters, written between 1895 and 1899, describe parties, examinations, and bicycle rides, and Loveman diligently sent her violets and poetry, though she was too young for a real flirtation. But in 1899, he received a letter from Elsie's older sister saying,

"My poor dear sister is too ill to write. She is unable to move and scarcely able to talk. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Soon another letter came to announce Elsie's death from the dyspepsia which was so tragically prevalent in this sorrow-faced decade.

But the most interesting of all these women was Edna Cain, gifted young editor of the Quitman, Georgia, newspaper. She was "Eve"; Loveman was "Adam". And they carried on a delightful affair in an imaginary Garden of Eden. They had met in Birmingham, while Loveman was ostensibly practicing law and while Edna was attending a reporter's convention. The half-frivolous, half-serious conversations they enjoyed at that time were prolonged by correspondence.

"What a conceited dear you are, Adam. You say something pretty in your wooing and then stop to admire it, when I thought you were

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1. Wise, Regina, letter to Loveman, September 5, 1899.

only saying it to please me!"<sup>1</sup>

she wrote him, and again,

"Now own up and we will here and now settle a disputed point in history -- i:e: as to whether or not there was a Lilith before Eve".<sup>2</sup>

An undercurrent of wistfulness slipped into the letters occasionally. During Loveman's stay in New York "Eve" wrote, sadly,

"Is it Eden there, Adam? I sometimes do not even believe in that delectable place, -- certainly not this afternoon. If you can confute and rebuke this horrible heresy of mine, please hasten to do so. Even if it is an illusion I want to believe in it, -- at least, if anybody else does".<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps, after all, there was something serious hidden under all these whimsicalities. Cannot one detect an inkling of it here?

"It is the same story with you of Eve who spoiled the Paradise, whether it is Eden or Grant Park. Couldn't you just shoulder your share of it, old man, and let it go at that? I'm as heartbroken as you could possibly be that we have to eat bread in the sweat of our brows and that we look grumpy. People who eat bread that way always do. But what are we to do about it? Raise Cain?"<sup>4</sup>

If there was a meaning to the allegory, could it have been that "Eve" realized only too well "Adam's" inability to provide for her? Whatever it was that spoiled their para-

1. Cain, Edna, letter to Loveman, August 19, 1902.
2. Ibid, September 27, 1902.
3. Ibid, February 3, 1903.
4. Ibid, August 19, 1903.

dise, it is certain that "Eve" found another one. Her charming letters to Loveman ceased with her marriage in 1905.

Loveman could never resist the romantic charms of women, Nature, and luxurious ease. Needless to say, it was not long before his interest in book-keeping was again on the wane. The pages of his ledgers, in Tuscaloosa as in Dalton, abounded with scribbled bits of poetry and the inevitable women's profiles.

One fairly well-known little poem, "Northport Town", beginning

"In Northport town the sun goes down  
Behind the hill; then all is still  
Within the peaceful village, where  
A benison is in the air.  
A pilgrim host of crickets yield  
An Angelus from every field;  
And there the moon looks kindly down  
In mellow beams on Northport town."

and ending

"Heaven, rain thy sweetest odors down,  
For Lottie lives in Northport town",<sup>1</sup>

was inspired by an incident which occurred about this time.

Loveman's desk being placed on the first floor, over-looking the street, he took great delight in watching the people pass by below him. One of the faces that grew familiar to him in this way was the pretty one of Lottie

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Northport Town", Verses, (complete), p. 6/

Nelson, a young school-teacher who passed every morning on her way to Northport. Fired by the beauty of Lottie's face, Loveman wrote the stanzas quoted above. But alas for his romantic imaginings, soon to be shattered by unpitying reality! One day the curtains were down, and for the first time Loveman could see his maiden's feet. She must have worn number sevens at least! And in the nineties, small feet were as essential to a beauty as a tiny waist. His romance gone, the one-time admirer groaned in humorous disillusion, "If I had only seen her feet, -- I would never have written that poem!"<sup>1</sup>

This incident is significant in that it illustrates Loveman's desire, common to all the belated romanticists, to use his poetry as a means of escape from reality. Like Bayard Taylor, Thomas Buchanan Read, Richard Henry Stoddard, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Thomas Bailey Aldrich and countless others, he fled from whatever might bring him pain or disillusionment and created in his poetry an unreal Nirvana to which he could escape with his visions. His poem "A Dreamer", written at this time, shows his characteristic attitude. The first two stanzas are:

"He is a dreamer, let him pass,  
He reads the writing in the grass;  
His seeing soul in rapture goes  
Beyond the beauty of the rose.

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1. Related to author by Mrs. Linka Friedman, February, 1932.

He is a dreamer, and doth know  
 To sound the farthest depth of woe;  
 His days are calm, majestic, free;  
 He is a dreamer, let him be.

He is a dreamer; all the day  
 Blest visions throng him on his way,  
 Past the far sunset and the light,  
 Beyond the darkness and the night.  
 He is a dreamer-- God! to be  
 Apostle of Infinity,  
 And mirror truth's translucent gleam;  
 He is a dreamer, let him dream".<sup>1</sup>

Loveman's first little volume, Poems, published on July 8, 1893 by an obliging Tuscaloosa printer, Mont I. Burton, collected the youthful ephemera composed during his idle hours of book-keeping and revealed him as a mildly sensuous dreamer, a follower of Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson from afar off, a belated romanticist in an age that was rapidly becoming completely materialistic and commercial. Enough of these youthful verses have already been quoted to show the general trend of the contents of this first book. It was fittingly dedicated to his mother, who had untiringly fostered his search for the ideal and protected him from the unromantic anxieties of the commonplace.

From the very beginning, Loveman's slow rise to popularity met almost no hindrances in the way of harsh criticism or unappreciative reviews. Encouraged by his

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1. Loveman, Robert, "A Dreamer", Verses, (complete), p. 23.

success, he had the little volume, with a few additional poems, republished by J. B. Lippincott Company in 1896. Strangely enough, it was lauded to the skies. The old-fashioned but influential Poetry Review and the New York, Boston, New Orleans, Louisville, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Chicago papers all had flattering accounts of it.<sup>1</sup> Even William Dean Howells had a word of praise.

One reason, undoubtedly, for this wide-spread commendation was that the important magazines, S. S. McClure's Harper's, Atlantic Monthly, The Century, Scribner's, Ainslee's, Lippincott's, and others, all conservative as a Connecticut blue-law, still held sway over the literary world. These and similar magazines had first accepted Loveman's poetry and started him on the upward path. They had neglected to criticize or condemn even his most absurd sentimentalisms and had encouraged him in his unquestioning acceptance of an outworn romantic tradition. Another reason was that the magazines were constantly on the lookout for new American literary material. They were always ready to give extravagant encouragement to any local star who showed signs of becoming popular.

Moreover, Loveman's verses were eminently saleable. The great American masses, most of them only superficially educated, still regarded poetry as did the "post-mortem"

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1. Newspaper clippings in Robert Loveman's scrap-book.

poets themselves. It was, to them, a sort of anodyne, an opiate to make them forget unpleasantness. Such verses as Loveman's, with their flavor of rose leaves and blissful idealism, were exactly what this public wanted and expected. Therein, perhaps, lay the secret of the acclaim with which his early efforts were greeted. For the magazines were anxious to satisfy the taste of their readers.

Robert Loveman stayed on in Dalton and Tuscaloosa for a few years, dabbling among his books and poetry or going on daily rambles through the woods. But the old familiar round of duties and pleasures had begun to pall on him. Will Harben, now a promising novelist, came back from a long European trip with tales of interesting literary people he had met and picturesque sites he had visited. And when, in the summer of 1895, Harben married Marybelle Chandler of South Carolina, to whom Loveman had introduced him, the poet's restlessness became well nigh intolerable.

Finally, in 1897, Loveman began making plans to go to New York the following winter. His father's death a year previous had resulted in the sale of the clothing store. There was no longer the tedious duty of book-keeping to hold him in Dalton. Moreover, he had tasted the enlivening wine of public approval; the circle of his admirers was gradually widening. Nothing would do but that he try his lot in the vast, rich markets of the metropolis. Ac-

cordingly, in the autumn of 1898, Loveman set out for the city, full of high hopes and romantic imaginings.

## Chapter II

## The Productive Period

The picturesque New York of the nineties into which Robert Loveman came was "dreamy with the past yet alive with mighty gathering forces".<sup>1</sup> On close observation, two distinct groupings are discernable among the literary lights of this interesting decade, the old conservative or so-called "high-brow" group on the one hand, and the new and more vigorous group of young writers, -- which included James Lane Allen, Richard Harding Davis, Hamlin Garland, Mary E. Wilkins, Stephen Crane, Booth Tarkington, Theodore Dreiser, Ellen Glasgow, Bliss Perry, Ernest Seton, O. Henry, and Edith Wharton, -- on the other.

With the exception of Bliss Perry, however, Loveman's literary friends and acquaintances were not chosen from the younger generation of writers but from among the more conservative group. E. C. Stedman, W. D. Howells, Clinton Scollard, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and John Burroughs were his associates.

The reason for this is not difficult to see. In the first place, Loveman's seclusion in Dalton had given him the outlook of a provincial. The dreamy leisureliness

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1. Pattee, F. L. The New American Literature, p. 1.

of the Southern small-town had fostered in him the same restricted local viewpoint that may be observed in the work of T. B. Aldrich, Clinton Scollard, and Joel Chandler Harris. His eyes had remained closed to the turbulent new issues of literature, the muck-raking, the "vulgar imper-tinence" of modern realism, just as they had to the stirring tariff wars and industrial squabbles of politics.

Then, too, in his imperfect self-administered education, he had read only the great romantic literature of the past. Modern science and its revolutionizing doctrines were beyond his comprehension. The romantic poets of a vanished age, Whitman, Poe, Shelley, Keats, Burns, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare, these had been Loveman's literary idols. His first poetry had been fashioned in imitation of theirs, or, more often, in imitation of Austin Dobson who, in turn, was an imitator.

Easily traceable in Loveman's verse is the influence of this facile and voluminous Austin Dobson. Such trite and uninspired rondeaux as the following, which was published in Loveman's 1896 volume of poems, show this influence unmistakably:

"In olden time a bonny maid,  
A cavalier and his cockade,  
A bit of sunshine and of shade  
In olden time.

He wooed the winsome woman till  
She yielded to his sovereign will,  
And to the farthest gates of death.

Love, love was their sweet shibboleth;  
 And happiness and joy untold  
 Blossomed within their hearts of gold  
 In olden time".<sup>1</sup>

The similarity in tone between the above stanzas and the first stanza of Dobson's rondeau "On the Hurry of This Time" is obvious.

"With slower pen men used to write,  
 Of old, when 'letters' were 'polite';  
 In Anna's, or in George's days,  
 They could afford to turn a phrase,  
 Or trim a straggling theme aright".<sup>2</sup>

Numerous other poems imitative of Dobson might be cited. A few are: the rondeaux "In Naishapur", "To London Town", "In Lighter Vein", "The Play is O'er", and "In Shakespeare Land", all of which were published in the 1896 volume. Even the fairly well-known "'La France' Rose", one of the best of this earlier group, is slightly reminiscent of Dobson's rondeau "To a June Rose". The first stanza of the latter and the whole of the former are quoted below:

"O Royal Rose! the Roman dress'd  
 His feast with thee; thy petals press'd  
 Augustan brows; thine odour fine,  
 Mix'd with the three-times-mingled wine,  
 Lent the long Thracian draught its zest".<sup>3</sup>

Then Loveman:

"Thou art the rarest regal rose  
 The Summer in her glory shows,

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1. Loveman, Robert, "In Olden Time", Verses, (complete), p. 37.
  2. Dobson, Austin, Poems, (complete), p. 331.
  3. Ibid, "To a June Rose", p. 329.

With golden honey on thy lips,  
 Patrician to thy petals' tips.

If thou hadst bloomed in Paris, when  
 The Commune thronged with frenzied men,  
 Some Robespierre plant by weeds begat  
 Had slain thee, sweet aristocrat".<sup>1</sup>

Such imitations, however, were uncritically received and often praised by the great magazines and publishing houses. Not only did these powerful rulers of the literary world bow down to the traditions of the past, but the highbrow and conservative world of New York society, ruled from the gilded drawing rooms of the Astors, Stuyvesants, Fishes, and their little clan, worshipped the ancient traditions of the English aristocracy. The new freedom and the bold, startling realism of modern fiction had not yet made themselves felt here, for this New York society, in literature as in manners, recognized only the sedate, the accepted, the conventional. Indeed, all the strong influences seemed to be against original work.

It is not strange, therefore, that Robert Loveman, long after his arrival in New York, continued producing conventionally romantic and often extremely unoriginal verse. However, though he was undoubtedly old-fashioned and provincial in many of his ideas, Loveman by no means closed his eyes to the broadening influences of city life.

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1. Loveman, Robert, "'La France' Rose", Verses, (complete), p. 8.

One of the subjects in which he was intensely interested was the theatre. A little poem "Cyrano Speaks", written at this time, was inspired by Mansfield's interpretation of Rostand's famous romantic hero. In it the ghost of the original Cyrano cries out:

"I, Cyrano de Bergerac,  
 Can have nor sleep, nor peace, alack!  
 In my poor semblance now they rage,  
 And fiercely strut upon the stage.  
 The actors are a worthy crew, --  
 Coquelin and Irving, Mansfield too.  
 I bid them all go hang and pack, --  
 I, Cyrano de Bergerac.

I, Cyrano de Bergerac,  
 The mimic world upon my track,  
 Ah, rare Roxane, before all men  
 We are impaled on Rostand's pen.  
 Once every tumult filled my breast,  
 And now they will not let me rest,  
 But I am dragged, unwilling, back, --  
 I, Cyrano de Bergerac".<sup>1</sup>

In spite of his love for the stage, however, the necessity for strict economy forced Loveman to seek cheaper amusements, such as bicycle rides and visits to public museums. He wrote his mother soon after his arrival,

"I shall spend very little money on the theatres as I can't afford it--and then there are so many things one can see for nothing. My wheel saves me carfare and will be a great pleasure to me here--the roads are so fine. I rode up 5th Avenue (all asphalt) to Central Park--went all around and then spent an hour or so in the National Museum of Art. Yesterday afternoon Harben and myself went through

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1. Loveman, Robert, Verses, (complete), p. 67.

the East side. It will all appear--I guess--in poems later. I am reading a great deal and writing some--and am sending out lots of verses that I haven't given a fair chance before to get into print."<sup>1</sup>

The punctuation of the above letter is Loveman's own. He habitually used the expressive dash in lieu of the comma or semi-colon.

To Robert Loveman's list of New York friends and acquaintances, new celebrities were constantly being added. He formed close friendships with Edmund Clarence Stedman, who helped him market his verse, and with Stedman's interesting wife, Laura. He often chatted with that polite Southern versifier of the old regime, Clinton Scollard, and Harben introduced him to Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), and to the dignified father of realism, William Dean Howells.

In a short time he had around him a small but select group of friends. The Harbens are mentioned in almost every one of Loveman's letters to his family. He wrote on January thirty-first,

"Mr. and Mrs. Harben took dinner here yesterday and spent nearly all the afternoon in my 'sweet' of a room. It was a little crowded but then we don't mind a crowd---".<sup>2</sup>

The prominent physiciſn, Dr. Mills, and his wife, are men-

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to mother, January 15, 1898.

2. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, January 31, 1898.

tioned often as companions at dinner or the theatre, and he also spent many enjoyable evenings with the charming young singer, Nell Knight, a southerner and a niece of Will Harben's. Then there was the Reverend Dr. Gotheil of Columbia University, with whom he became fairly intimate. Loveman describes him as

"about seventy-- a hale, hearty old fellow-- lots of books-- is a great thinker and worker".<sup>1</sup>

A call on Dr. Gotheil every Sunday night became a regular part of his program.

Loveman led a gay social life indeed among these intelligensia with whom he became acquainted. He wrote, on January twenty-ninth,

"My silk hat and dress suit come in very handy, as I am invited out a great deal. I have been to a reception at Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Mrs. Frank Leslie's and to the theatre with the Harbens and a very attractive artist, a Miss Tracy--. Last night I went to hear Melba---".<sup>2</sup>

Here and there among his new acquaintances, wherever it seemed likely to advance his interests, Loveman scattered copies of his books. This was an accepted courtesy among literary people in the nineties, to which the person favored often responded by a gift of one of his own books. In this way Loveman received books from Clinton Scollard,

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, January 29, 1898.

2. Ibid, January 31.

Bliss Carmen, and H. L. Mencken, with all three of whom he became fairly intimate.

Loveman found it easy to make new friends. Even his landlady seems to have fallen under the spell of his likeable personality, for he wrote in January,

"My landlady has moved me downstairs-- a big fine room next to parlor -- folding doors between-- and I like the new place. No stairs to climb, and elegantly furnished. The mirror and chandelier must have cost five hundred dollars. Guess she thinks I am the star boarder".<sup>1</sup>

Life in New York was a glorious adventure to Loveman, but when, not many months after his arrival, the Harbens began to plan a long trip through Europe, he could not resist the urge to see still more of the world. He wrote his family in March, explaining his decision,

"I am not particularly anxious to leave New York, but I may not be able again to go abroad-- and the trip will help me in many ways. I will meet people in England and France that are worth knowing-- and I hope to write more and better verse as I see and learn more of the world".<sup>2</sup>

Since Loveman only had about fifty dollars, his brother Sam and several other members of the family obligingly lent him a hundred and fifty more. By March twenty-third, all the plans were made and first class passage engaged for April second on board the S. S. Massachusetts of the Atlantic

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, January 29, 1898.

2. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, March 6, 1898.

Transport Line. Loveman wrote,

"Harben's cabin is next to mine, and we will be able to hear each other groan and grunt 'when it's midnight on the ocean and a storm is on the deep'".<sup>1</sup>

In going to Europe to enrich his experience and his literary efforts, Loveman was merely following a tradition established early in the nineteenth century by Washington Irving, who had spent almost half his life travelling, and who had "loved the rich ore of old, neglected volumes in Spanish libraries even more than the newer manuscripts of his own young nation".<sup>2</sup> Emerson had stoutly protested against this same tradition in his essay on "Self-Reliance", written in 1841, in a condemnation which is applicable at every point to Robert Loveman:

"It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Travelling. . . remains for all educated Americans. . . He who travels to be amused or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. . . The rage of travelling is itself only a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. . . We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our whole minds, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. . ." <sup>1</sup>

For like Irving, Longfellow, Lowell and countless

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, March 23, 1898.
2. Beard, Charles and Mary, The Rise of American Civilization, p. 794.
3. Emerson, Ralph Waldo, Essays and English Traits, p. 83.

others, Loveman's journey to Europe was really a sentimental pilgrimage to the shrines of departed literary geniuses. His mind was assimilative rather than creative; and his poetic talent was essentially an imitative one. The smooth veneer which a European voyage could give him would put the finishing touches to his broad but shallow romantic education.

Accordingly, on April second, Robert Loveman, taking with him his inevitable bicycle, embarked on the S. S. Massachusetts. Several letters of introduction to European celebrities had been generously given him by two of his New York friends, Dr. Gotheil and Bliss Carmen, the poet. All in all, he considered himself fully equipped to see and enjoy the continent.

The second day on the ocean, Loveman gayly wrote his mother:

"We are out on the sea at Sandy Hook. Not a bit sick-- yet. When I get home I'll have much to tell you, -- how my gold glasses were stolen in New York and how I got them back -- only to drop them in the Atlantic Ocean. Some strange fish or inhabitant of the deep now reads with them, way down in the caves of coral".<sup>1</sup>

The Spanish-American War, which was occasioning such a blaze of patriotism back in America, was viewed by Loveman with the same blissful unconcern he gave to most other

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, April 3, 1898.

public disturbances. He wrote from the steamer that the captain had signalled, "War or peace?" to a passing vessel and had received the answer "Peace".<sup>1</sup> Beyond this, and a casual mention weeks later of the fact that everybody was talking about the war, there was no indication that Loveman even knew a war was going on. His thoughts seemed completely taken up with the thrilling prospect of Europe that lay before him.

Arrived at London, after twelve days on the ocean, Loveman and his friends established themselves in a good boarding house at 27 Upper Bedford Place, where they lived better and at less expense than in New York. The first few weeks were passed quietly, with little excitement. Loveman says:

"We went to see Madame Tussaud's wax exhibition, and with this exception have not been out at night to a theater since we have been in London. We go out in the morning and afternoon and usually remain in at night.--The Season opens here very soon, -- Opera, Court affairs, etc. It will be very gay, and we will then take in some of the theatres--".<sup>2</sup>

At last came the Season, with its gay social whirl.

"I was at Epsom, about fifteen miles from London, to the Derby race, last Wednesday. I suppose there were three or four thousand people there. I also attended a concert the other day where Patti sang. Her last number was 'Robin

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, April 3, 1898.  
2. Ibid, April 28, 1898.

Adair' and for an encore she gave 'Home, Sweet Home'. Her voice is extremely sweet and clear, though I do not suppose it has the volume it possessed in other years".<sup>1</sup>

This was almost the last important public appearance of the great Italian singer, who had made her operatic debut in 1861, before Robert Loveman's birth.

In London, as in New York, Loveman made several literary acquaintances.

"I was at lunch with a Mr. C. G. Montefiore last week, a very learned man and a very wealthy one. He sent me a handsome book of his",

"I met Israel Zangwill at his home here a few days since. He is an interesting young man -- just my age -- unmarried. He is at work on a play for Richard Mansfield".<sup>2</sup>

Not for a moment, however, did Loveman neglect his reading or his poetry. One of the first things he did on arriving in London was to write the poem "England", which was published in the Pall Mall Magazine. Then chief among his European souvenirs, we may be sure, was his ticket to the Reading Room of the British Museum. Here Loveman spent the greater part of his time. He wrote,

"I stay there until noon every day, and often in the afternoon".<sup>3</sup>

It is told of him that one day during his London stay he

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, May 26, 1898.

2. Ibid, June 2, 1898.

3. Ibid.

was expected to join a party of celebrated people at luncheon, but failed to keep his appointment. Later it turned out that he had become absorbed in an old edition of Pepys's Diary in the British Museum and had forgotten his social obligation.

Though Loveman would have been content to stay longer in England, the Harbens were anxious to go on to Paris. So eager were Loveman and Harben to see the charms of the "siren city" that the moment the train stopped in Paris, they walked blissfully through the streets for several hours, at last remembering, to their horror and dismay, that poor Mrs. Harben had been left sitting in the railway station guarding the luggage.<sup>1</sup>

Loveman was charmed with France from the very first. He wrote,

"England is great and massive -- everything denoting sturdy Anglo-Saxon strength. Here the trees, cottages, and forests as you come up from Dieppe seem to say, 'We are French and therefore artistic' (---and this is indeed a land of art. If I were asked to describe the French in a word-- I should say-- 'Bright eyes'".<sup>2</sup>

The little party was soon comfortably quartered in a French pension, near the Boulevard St. Michel and near the gardens of the Luxemburg. Loveman's account of his first French breakfast is very amusing.

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1. Related by Morris Loveman .

2. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, June 2, 1898.

"Of my first breakfast in Paris--they brought it to my room. I thought that they thought I was sick-- and I told the sad-eyed French boy to 'take it down'. Then I asked him if Harben had been down to breakfast and twenty or thirty other questions-- in English. As he didn't understand a word I said-- and thought I was only a harmless lunatic-- he put down the tray of rolls and chocolate and backed out of the room-- eyeing me with just suspicion".<sup>1</sup>

The first few days were spent riding the busses and rambling through streets and art galleries. It is typical of Loveman he jotted down his and Harben's expense accounts for the first week on his starched cuffs and then, with his usual dreamy absent-mindedness, proceeded to send the shirt, cuffs and all, to the wash, where all the carefully balanced record was obliterated.<sup>2</sup>

It was not long before Loveman, his mind always quick and adaptable, was beginning to feel more at ease in the little pension with its friendly, cosmopolitan group of boarders, -- where there was

"very good fare-- a candle to light you to bed-- and a little pitcher that holds about ten drops of water".<sup>3</sup>

He spent three or four hours every day studying French, which he considered a "melodious language and very easy to learn",<sup>4</sup> and soon announced that he intended to write some

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, July 23, 1898.
2. Related to author by Morris Loveman, January, 1932.
3. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, June 12, 1898.
4. Ibid.

French poems on English subjects. It is doubtful whether these poems, if they were written at all, were successful.

However, Loveman did write some of his best known English poems at this time, one of which is his "The Siren City", beginning:

"Paris sparkles as she lies  
 All unbosomed to the sun;  
 For the prize within her eyes  
 Battles have been lost and won.  
 She is haughty, she is vain;  
 In her arms the serpent Seine,  
 And with wooing, cooing wiles,  
 Paris dazzles, Paris smiles".<sup>1</sup>

Another, called "Paris", is light and meaningless like the first, but rather pleasing.

"This is Paris, 's'il vous plait',--  
 Careless, debonair, and gay,  
 Love and laughter, song and shout,  
 Women, wine, and merry bout.

This is Paris, 'le voici',--  
 Music, mirth, and misery,  
 Art divine, and sodden shame,  
 Glory, poverty, and fame.

This is Paris, 'ecoutez',--  
 After night must come the day,  
 Weak, inconstant, yea, accurst,  
 Folly's bubble soon will burst".<sup>2</sup>

Both were probably written with the American market in view.

The Louvre inspired "The Pictures", in which several paintings that had impressed Loveman are briefly and musically enumerated, with no attempt at a unifying thought. From

1. Loveman, Robert, "The Siren City", Verses, (complete), p. 66.

2. Ibid, "Paris", p. 66.

the same source of inspiration came "La Joconde", an unoriginal apostrophe to Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa".

At times, already, Loveman's enjoyment of Europe was beginning to be faintly tinged with homesickness.

"Very often we get lonesome as dogs, and think how nice and cozy it would be at home. We'll head for New York one of these days and rest a while from stiff strangers, red 'Baedekers'--excellent views'--and 'sights', 'guides' and things--though we have managed to get a lot of fun out of the most dreary prospects---".<sup>1</sup>

But there was much more of Europe yet to be seen.

A trip to southern Europe, passing through Hungary, the native land of Loveman's parents, was impossible because of the low state of their finances. However, they planned a short journey through Switzerland and Germany, which would cost only about twenty dollars apiece. Loveman at last could see the country he had looked forward to most of all, the Germany about which he had heard so many stories from his mother. After a short visit to Switzerland, they would stay in Munich for several weeks, then go up to the Rhine by Frankfort, and stop in Brussels on their way back to England. Anticipating his German tour, Loveman wrote his family,

"French is spoken at Lucerne, but I will feel more at home in Germany-- where I can

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, July 5, 1898.

talk a little and get some 'noodle soub'--  
like my mother used to make".<sup>1</sup>

On July second, the travellers arrived in Switzerland, where Loveman revelled in the vastness and beauty of the Swiss Alps.

"There are lofty, snow-capped mountains towering all around us. Tonight from my window I can see the illuminations on the top of one-- like a necklace of golden fire. The lake is lighted with colored flames-- and big musical bells chime day and night".<sup>2</sup>

Here, too, in Switzerland, there were social affairs and more acquaintances.

"We were guests of the American Minister yesterday. He entertained all the United States folks at his summer castle a few miles up the lake. The affair was very elaborate-- music, fireworks-- beautiful women and lots of champagne-- and a feast generally. I think he is a Pittsburgh millionaire".<sup>3</sup>

After climbing Mount Pilatus with Harben, tramping over Lucerne, and talking German to the Swiss-German inhabitants whenever possible, Loveman and his friends journeyed on to Interlaken, the center of Switzerland, with its lofty Jungfrau towering near-by. In Switzerland, as in France and England, Loveman wrote a few verses as he went, a trite rondeau called "In Switzerland", and an equally trite little lyric called "The Mountain"; both of these were rather in-

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, June 27, 1898.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

significant. Evidently, however, Loveman considered these verses sincere and serious attempts, for in a letter to his family, written from Switzerland, he said,

"I will keep on singing my way through Europe, and if there is true music in the songs--the world may listen to my lines".<sup>1</sup>

Then, from the sublime to the ridiculous, as was characteristic of him:

"I have enough material pigeon-holed away in my mind to fill forty large volumes, and when the lines get themselves ready to be writ-- I'll try and write them. Also, among the philosophical essays, etc., chapters will be devoted to 'The Rise and Fall of the Boarding House', 'Landladies I have Known', 'The Miss Terries of Paris', 'How to be Happy Though Travelling', 'How to Do Europe on 10.000 a Year (10.000 centimes)', 'French at a Glance', etc., etc. We now talk a mixture of John Bull, French, Swiss, and German,--so you know it's fine!"<sup>2</sup>

When they had "played snowball and gathered violets" on the mighty Jungfrau, the travellers went on to Frankfort, Germany, "weary and half sick".<sup>3</sup> But tired as he was Loveman must have been in his element there. He gathered pictures and post-cards everywhere to send his mother, each inscribed with a message in German. In Frankfort there were to be explored long streets bordered with quaint, high-roofed houses. Then came the chief glory of all, the beautiful boat trip down the Rhine, with occasion-

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, July 15, 1898.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., August 2, 1898.

al glimpses of picturesque old castles high among the cliffs.

Loveman felt at home among the Germans, although he was satiated with travelling and impatient to get back to Dalton. He wrote:

"You needn't be surprised to see me in September or October. I am tired of sewing on buttons, mending my pants, and umbrella, etc. Besides,--the spool of thread Mamma gave me is nearly all used up, and I need another,-- so you see circumstances are just forcing me to the--

'Little house that sets on a hill,  
The pasture just below!'.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the contact with German people and the sight of plump, hearty German housewives going to market reminded Loveman too often of his own mother.

After the pleasant trip down the Rhine came a brief, rough voyage on the North Sea, and the travellers were in London once more, at their old lodging house. Here they spent a few weeks, Loveman and Harben doing much reading in the British Museum. Loveman wrote,

"I have been reading the lives of Heine, Tennyson, Byron, the letters of Madame de Stael, and many other good books".<sup>2</sup>

Here in the stimulating atmosphere of this great library, within walking distance of scenes that had inspired England's greatest poets, Loveman must have been unusually

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, August 15, 1898.

2. Ibid.

moved to write poetry. However, the poems which can be definitely ascribed to this period are few in number and by no means of the highest quality. One rondeau, "In Devonshire", contains the unforgivable line,

"Warm with the wooing of the wind".

Another poem, "Heine", is sentimental and uninteresting. And these are illustrative of the rest.

Altogether, neither the workmanship nor the content of the European poetry shows any advance over the slightly more idealistic verses of Loveman's early youth. He seems always to have been wrapped in an unobtrusive and congenial but all-absorbing egotism. The mountains and historic sites of Europe he regarded not as objective phenomena to be admired for themselves, but as stimuli to which he might react favorably or unfavorably. In reality, Europe did not change Loveman at all. He returned to America the same person he had left it,-- a belated romanticist, dreaming always of the Past and blind to the quickening forces of the Present.

The last few weeks in England were spent in much the same way as on the previous visit there. Loveman was now feeling himself quite cosmopolitan. He said:

"I am wearing Swiss shoes, a Paris straw hat,-- my hose are from Germany,-- my hair was trimmed in France,-- and even

all this is a vanity".<sup>1</sup>

But he was ready to go home, and wrote his mother:

"I want to build up my shattered estate, and may come to Dalton if I don't see a good outlook in New York-- and I don't suppose I will. So you and I, dear mother, will most probably keep house together for a few months".<sup>2</sup>

Loveman's untiring devotion to his mother, which he rarely attempted to express in words, made him unappreciative of the advantages of a further stay in England. He longed to be once more under his mother's protective, cheerful guidance, where he could dream uninterruptedly of the far-off scenes and countries he had visited.

After a week of waiting for Loveman's check for the return passage to be sent from Dalton, the party sailed from Glasgow, on August twenty-seventh, on the S. S. City of Rome, arriving in New York on September eighth. Fifth Avenue had no charms for Loveman this time. His own Georgia hills filled all his thoughts, and in the shortest possible time he was back among them. After the long, weary journey across the world, no prospect could have been sweeter to him than a quiet year in his own "Robin's Nest".

Alas for his hopes! No sooner had he settled down to work in earnest, in the cozy corner which his friend Mr. T. N. Shope, editor of the Dalton Citizen, had set aside for

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, August 2, 1898.

2. Loveman, Robert, letter to mother, August 2, 1898.

him in his own private office, than the old unrest seized him. After the busy hum of the city, the gay social atmosphere, and the encouragement derived from conversations with other literary people, Dalton must have seemed to him pitifully small and dull. Sad must the realization have been that, if he were to make his mark in the world, he must exchange, for a time at least, his quiet home joys for the more active and stimulating life of the city.

Accordingly, when Harben wrote long letters from New York begging him to change his mind and come north for the winter, he was sorely tempted. "Dined at Dr. Fite's last night", Harben wrote him on September twenty-second, (the Fites being mutual friends of Loveman's and Harben's), "and they almost wept when told of your stay South this winter"<sup>1</sup>. The advantages of New York life were too obvious for Loveman to deny, and ambition mastered him at last. In October he once again left his loved home and set out for the metropolis.

The winter of 1899 begins the busiest and most productive phase of Robert Loveman's life. For three consecutive winters he lived in New York. Full of new ideas and visions, smiled upon by everyone who knew him, he put his whole heart into his work. And in these three years, the

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1. Harben, Will. N., letter to Loveman, September 22, 1898.

poetry that is unquestionably the best of his whole career was composed.

The reason for his unusual activity and vigor is not far to seek. There had been in Loveman, ever since he began writing, two desires which were constantly at war with each other,-- his desire for the peaceful, harmonious atmosphere of his Dalton home, presided over by his mother's kindly presence; and his restless, insistent craving for wide recognition as a poet. Since he could not do his best work in Dalton, and since he hated the thought of another prolonged separation from his mother, he finally conceived the happy idea of bringing his mother and his sister, Annie, to live with him in New York.

In the course of a long summer in Dalton, the two women were at last won over to Loveman's proposal. Sam and Louis Loveman were both married, young Bert would be off at school, and there were no urgent duties to hold them at home. Accordingly, on October twentieth, arrangements for room and board having already been made by the Harbens, the little family arrived in New York. Soon they were pleasantly established in a roomy flat on the fifth floor of the building occupied by the Harbens. Will Harben's sister, Mrs. Knight, with her attractive daughter, Nell, now preparing her trousseau for her approaching marriage to a rich English nobleman, were only two blocks away, and there must

have been many enjoyable visits between the three families.

Both the cheerful, homey atmosphere which Mrs. Loveman always created around herself, and the stimulating influences of New York literary contacts were now available to Loveman at the same time. This is undoubtedly the secret of his steady and successful work during the next three years.

The spring of 1901 brought with it the turning point of Robert Loveman's career. This was the publishing in the April issue of Harper's Magazine of his well-known "Rain Song", the poem on which his fame chiefly rests. Loveman was afterwards fond of relating the manner in which he came to write this song. His room, overlooking Central Park, was in the attic of the building. On the night that he wrote the "Rain Song", he lay awake for a long time and listened to the sound of the rain-drops on the roof. While he was trying to go to sleep, the musical lines of this song kept running through his mind. Finally, in the early dawn, the words came to him. Afraid to trust his memory, he got up, lighted a candle, and wrote the "Rain Song":<sup>1</sup>

"It isn't raining rain to me,  
It's raining daffodils;  
In every dimpled drop I see  
Wild flowers on the hills.

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1. This account was found among Loveman's lecture notes in his scrap-book.

The clouds of gray engulf the day,  
 And overwhelm the town;  
 It isn't raining rain to me,  
 It's raining roses down.

It isn't raining rain to me,  
 But fields of clover bloom,  
 Where every buccaneering bee  
 May find a bed and room.

A health unto the happy!  
 A fig for him who frets!--  
 It isn't raining rain to me,  
 It's raining violets".<sup>1</sup>

Two days later he sent it, unrevised, to Harper's Magazine. The April issue of the magazine had already gone to press, but, as if the editor had some premonition of the little poem's success, the presses were stopped to insert it.

In a few short months Robert Loveman, formerly a little known, almost obscure poet, awoke to find himself comparatively famous. The popularity of the "Rain Song" spread like wildfire. Its words were on all lips. Loveman received letters from people everywhere begging him for autographed copies of it. Clubs of all sorts implored him to recite it for them. Composers sought permission to set it to music. Robert Loveman had at last obtained some of the recognition of which he had dreamed when he had written from Switzerland,

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Rain Song", Verses, (complete), p. 1.

"If there is true music in my songs, the world will listen to my lines".<sup>1</sup>

Even H. L. Mencken, that king of scorners, whom Loveman had met during a trip to Baltimore the previous year, wrote him,

"I envy you the day you wrote the 'Rain Song', and every other man with music in him must envy you, too".<sup>2</sup>

Loveman had been contributing to Mencken's Smart Set for several years, and there had gradually grown up a congenial feeling between the two men, both of them scorners of trite conventions of society, and both confirmed lovers of good music, German, and "good fellows". Sometimes their correspondence related to their common business affairs. Mencken wrote Loveman on receiving an autographed copy of The Gates of Silence, published in 1903 by the Knickerbocker Press:

"Some day-- I have been planning it for a long time-- I hope to do an article on these beautiful songs of yours. But you know how difficult that is; to convey the charm of poetry is impossible in prose, and so one is reduced to the manufacture of mortar between quotations."<sup>3</sup>

And sometimes Mencken sent Loveman copies of his own works, accomplished by bits of his caustic humor, such as:

"I am in a poor state, overworked and some-

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, July 15, 1898.
2. Mencken, H. L., letter to Loveman, November 28, 1902.
3. Ibid, August 31, 1902.

what pestered by hay-fever. I enclose some pious literature",<sup>1</sup>

and again,

"I am mailing a copy of a book on Nietzsche done in 1908-- an attempt to translate a somewhat difficult German into the vulgate. It has been republished in London and has done fairly well, but it's full of bad writing. Another, smaller Nietzsche book, one on George Bernard Shaw, two small volumes of an incomplete edition of Ibsen-- and that's all. All, that is, save a book of verse-- at twenty-three. Will I let you see it? I will not. Not for millions! Besides, there is only one copy remaining in Christendom."<sup>2</sup>

Often, too, Mencken sent invitations to Loveman for another visit in Baltimore. In 1913 he wrote:

"I wish your oratorical tours would bring you near enough to Baltimore to let me send ruffians out to kidnap you. You have admirers here who are genuine human beings-- not pale highbrows, but honest fellows who hope to go to hell, and will probably get their hope. Every Saturday night a lot of them meet to play good music for two hours-- (those who can't play try to listen)-- and then to put in two hours with Maryland victuals and real Pilsener. A noble clan. You would enjoy them and they would enjoy you."<sup>3</sup>

Though the "Rain Song" first brought Robert Loveman to the notice of the general public, it was The Gates of Silence that caused men like Mencken and William Dean Howells to see in him a gleam of real promise. This volume contains the poems universally adjudged his best work.

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1. Mencken, H. L., letter to Loveman, undated.
  2. Ibid, November 28, 1908.
  3. Ibid, June 17, 1913.

They deal primarily with immortality, and, though influenced by Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and Whitman's Leaves of Grass, are, for the most part, original in thought. They display a pruned simplicity of tone and wording which makes them far superior to most of Loveman's earlier poetry. The Gates of Silence is, above all else, a book of questioning, of doubt, and of a vague, indefinable fear of the unknown.

"One by one the gods we know  
 Weary of our trust,  
 One by one the prophets go  
 Dreaming to the dust.

All the cobweb creeds of men  
 Vanish into air,  
 Leaving nothing save a 'When?'  
 Nothing save a 'Where?'"<sup>1</sup>

A far cry this is from those stilted youthful rondeaux, dripping with sentimentality.

The optimistic idealism of his youth has deepened into a wonder that sometimes approaches pessimism and makes him ask:

"Why think the soul survive its clay  
 Even an instant's span?  
 What beacon holds aloft a ray,  
 Presumptuous, proud man?"<sup>2</sup>

And the doubt sometimes became a haunting fear for his own soul.

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1. Loveman, Robert, "III", Verses, (complete), p. 108.

"What if I wake in the dark,  
After the last long sleep?"<sup>1</sup>

and again,

"All else of Man is dead, and I  
Stand lone upon the sphere;  
The pale earth shivers, sigh on sigh,  
And shakes with frenzied fear.

Some Titan tears the world apart,  
And sets the seas to rout,  
And I, a silence at my heart,  
See the cold sun fade out".<sup>2</sup>

The majority of his poems, however, reveal a faith in man's immortality. A certainty of eternal life made him exult at times.

"My swift soul as it flies  
In triumph singing on,  
Will pass still lakes of Moonrise,  
Wild cataracts of Dawn".<sup>3</sup>

Always present to fortify him was his love of Nature. He saw in natural phenomena the working of a divine providence incapable of destruction, a God as vast and powerful as the visible universe.

"I want no trickster God,--  
No cunning, crafty spook--  
Who smites a people, or a rock,  
Or one who writes a book.

For me a God who flings  
Out of his spendthrift hands  
The whirling worlds like pebbles,<sup>4</sup>  
The meshed stars like sands".

1. Loveman, Robert, Verses, (complete), p. 109.

2. Ibid, p. 115.

3. Ibid, "X", p. 110.

4. Ibid, "XI", p. 111.

In his moments of deeper insight Death was no "pale spectre" but a harmonious union with Nature, a glorious fulfillment.

"I could not see till it was dead;  
Then through the mold and wet  
A rose breathed softly overhead,  
I heard a violet".<sup>1</sup>

But these were age-old questions that Loveman was asking in The Gates of Silence, and it must be confessed that he gave to them no new answers. All told, there is merely an eternal, "Whither?" and the reply "I do not know. Maybe we go into a greater loneliness than we have yet found; maybe we merge into oneness with the grass and the flowers". Omar had wondered and found merely that

"Earth could not answer, nor the Seas that mourn  
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;  
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs revealed  
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn".<sup>2</sup>

Whitman had asked himself:

"Darest thou now, O soul,  
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,  
Where neither ground is for the feet  
nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,  
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,  
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips  
nor eyes, are in that land",<sup>3</sup>

and had believed only in a vague and indefinable but joyous

1. Loveman, Robert, "II", Verses, (complete), p. 107.
2. Fitzgerald, Edward, Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, p. 61.
3. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 410.

fulfillment:

"Till when the ties loosen,  
All but the ties eternal, Time and  
Space,  
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor  
any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,  
In Time and Space, O soul! prepared for them,  
Equal, equipped at last, (O joy! O  
fruit of all!) them to fulfil, O soul!"<sup>1</sup>

And Emily Dickinson, a generation before Loveman, had  
spoken bravely of the question beyond death:

"When that is and that which was  
Apart, intrinsic, stand,  
And this brief tragedy of flesh  
Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front  
And mists are carved away,--"<sup>2</sup>

and affirmed her certain belief in immortality:

"I never spoke with God,  
Nor visited in heaven;  
Yet certain am I of the spot,  
As if the chart were given".<sup>3</sup>

Compared with his own earlier verse, it is true, Loveman's The Gates of Silence is a great step toward poetic maturity. Compared with these queries of Omar and Whitman and Emily Dickinson, full of their tense and real emotion, it is slight and unsatisfying. Perhaps, after all, he merely echoed the important poetry of a decade before,--

1. Whitman, Walt, Leaves of Grass, p. 410.
2. Dickinson, Emily, "My Choice", p. 156.
3. Ibid, "Chartless", p. 188.

Emerson's 'Terminus', Longfellow's 'Ultima Thule', Whittier's 'A Life-time', Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar', and Browning's 'Asolando', with its preoccupation with death and its note of philosophic resignation. Doubtless, here again, he was only a belated romanticist, who, his thoughts turned heavenwards for a moment, wondered vaguely about the eternal mysteries that had stirred the great romanticists of the Past.

### Chapter III

#### The Decline of Poetic Powers

The wide acclaim which greeted The Gates of Silence made Loveman feel that he had earned a rest. He had given to New York the busiest and richest years of his life. Now his ambition was somewhat abated. He could go home to the little town in the blue hills of Georgia with that peace in his heart which comes only of work well done.

Although the book sold well, the material returns from it were by no means large. Monetary success had never been for Loveman an aim in itself; the possession of money was, if anything, almost embarrassing to him. He never seemed to know quite what to do with it. In the dream-world in which he lived, mere existence, with freedom of mind and the affection of friends, appeared to be all that was necessary for contentment.

But to keep the esteem of practical men, one must be not only self-possessed but self-supporting. It was not, then, to satisfy his own desires that Loveman began to look about him for a more substantial means of livelihood than verse writing. It was a concession on his part to the opinions of a material-minded society.

In Birmingham, through the aid of his brother Morris, he obtained a job on the editorial staff of the Birmingham

News. For a very small amount of work Loveman received what he considered an excellent salary, twenty-five dollars a week. For a few days everything went along smoothly. Loveman became an admired member of his brother's family circle, and Morris's two little daughters soon grew to adore their newly discovered uncle, with his musical, sing-songy voice and his everlasting, mischievous teasing. But Loveman was not destined for the prosaic occupation in which he was engaged.

At the end of the first week, on receiving his salary, he suddenly announced that he was ready to go back to Dalton. Persuasion had no effect. He insisted that twenty-five dollars was quite enough for his present needs,-- and home he went. Later the true reason for this strange conduct was revealed. Loveman had found out that the editor of the newspaper had discharged another reporter, a family man, to give him his job. The woebegone face of the exiled man, who had persisted in loafing near his old place of service, had haunted Loveman and had at last proved too much for his tender heart. He had finally offered his resignation to the editor, asking that the former reporter be again installed in his old position. So Loveman's attempt at money-making, like his short-lived law practice, was, in the eyes of the world, an utter failure.

Not that this failure ruffled Loveman's composure in the least.— To his romantic soul an hour's communion with

Nature was worth twenty spent over an office desk. Just as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, he returned to Dalton and devoted himself to his poetry, his family, and his friends. He adopted gardening and chicken-raising as his avocations and might have been seen in the early hours of any fine morning tending his roses or his radishes. Later in the day, he would stroll down to his desk in the newspaper office of T. N. Shope, where he would work for a few hours on his verses.

Loveman's poetry of this period is almost universally trite and uninteresting, perhaps because of the uninteresting and commonplace nature of the poet's own activities. The publication of More Echoes from the Gates of Silence, in 1904, marks the beginning of Loveman's poetic decline, for this volume, inspired by the death of his brother Sam, is really only a pale, unimpassioned copy of the book that had brought him nearer to fame than he ever came again.

Often there is no attempt to disguise the imitative nature of the verses. The following, for instance:

"God flings the golden days like coins  
 Out of his spendthrift hands;  
 They lie up-piled by centuries  
 O'er all the lavish lands.

Old miser Time hoards them away,  
 Cunning and carefully;  
 Perhaps he hopes at last to own  
 All of Eternity."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Loveman, Robert, "XXII", Verses, (complete), p. 177.

is only a slightly contorted reflection of:

"For me a God who flings  
 Out of his spendthrift hands  
 The whirling worlds like pebbles,  
 The meshed stars like sands".<sup>1</sup>

The paucity of Loveman's ideas, not always noticeable before, now becomes obvious on account of this unfortunate trick of repetition. The sickly sonnet below:

"I thought that I had died and, fleet of soul,  
 Was speeding outward through the realms of Night,  
 On and yet on I winged my eager flight,  
 Straining to catch a first glimpse of the goal;  
 I felt the billows of the darkness roll,  
 Waving about me in their turgid might;  
 I prayed to God that but one ray of light  
 Would glimmer faintly from a friendly knoll;  
 The clumsy ages slowly crept along,  
 And still I drifted o'er the unknown way,  
 Until, afar, I heard seraphic song,  
 And came where weary pilgrims rest and pray;  
 Then, then, our child that died at infancy  
 Came toddling out to kiss and welcome me",<sup>2</sup>

seems even more disheartening when placed beside the fine simplicity of:

"And I, a silence at my heart,  
 Saw the cold sun fade out".<sup>3</sup>

More noticeable, too, in this volume, is his borrowing from the poets of the past. The stanza quoted below, for instance, calls to mind immediately Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar":

"The shades of evening softly fall,  
 Farewell, a long farewell,

1. Loveman, Robert, "XXI", Verses, (complete), p. 177.

2. Ibid, p. 172.

3. Ibid, p. 115.

Parting must come to one and all,  
 Farewell, again farewell;  
 Love like a beacon shines afar,  
 And Faith is steadfast as a star,  
 Before us lies the harbor-bar,  
 Farewell, and then farewell".<sup>1</sup>

These lines are reminiscent of Swinburne's "Garden of Proserpine":

"Come, O Death, with rest and peace,  
 I am ill of life;  
 Come, O Death, and let us cease  
 Love, and joy, and strife---".<sup>2</sup>

And the tone of the following faintly echoes Browning's "Epilogue to Asolando":

"What! I fear death?  
 Believe me, no;  
 Out of a mystery we come,  
 Into the light we go".<sup>3</sup>

Many others could be quoted, but these will suffice to illustrate the pervading imitative quality of the volume.

Nor was Songs from a Georgia Garden, also published in 1904, more successful. Some of the fancies are rather pretty. Take the following for example:

"I thought to cull thee roses,  
 But bear a sprig of rue  
 Pain-purpled in its closes,  
 Both bitter-sweet and true.

I thought to cull thee roses,  
 Take now this wreath of me,  
 Hang it on thy bruised heart,  
 —I gathered it for thee."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Loveman, Robert, "XV", Verses, (complete), p. 173.
  2. Ibid, "VI", p. 169.
  3. Ibid, "IV", p. 168.
  4. Ibid, "III", p. 135.

and this:

"I caught a noontide hour  
Fast in my eager hand;  
I held it like a flower  
I sought to understand.

I pluck'd its petals softly  
Of moments each away;  
I long'd to learn the thoughts that burn  
The bosom of the day".<sup>1</sup>

But the latter thought was expressed far better by Emily Dickinson, many years before, in her poem, "Utterance":

"I found the phrase to every thought  
I ever had, but one;  
And that defies me, -- as a hand  
Did try to chalk the sun

To races nurtured in the dark;  
How would your own begin?  
Can blaze be done in cochineal,  
Or noon in mazarin?"

And the first two stanzas of "Morning Song", quoted below:

"Every little blade of grass  
Says 'Good-Morning' when we pass;  
Every tree doth nod and say,  
'Tis a rare' or 'rainy day';

Every rose on every bush,  
Be it Brier, Moss, or Blush,  
Lifts its lips in fragrant bliss  
For a caress or a kiss".<sup>2</sup>

are reminiscent of another of Emily Dickinson's lyrics,

"Autum":

"The morns are meeker than they were,  
The nuts are getting brown;

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1. Loveman, Robert, "XIII", Verses, (complete), p. 140.  
2. Ibid, "Morning Song", p. 155.

The berry's cheek is plumper,  
The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,  
The field a scarlet gown,  
Lest I should be old-fashioned,  
I'll put a trinket on".

It would be easy to find many other imitative stanzas. Some, indeed, bookish or affected in tone, rival the worst of his early efforts.

Perhaps Loveman himself dimly realized that his Muse was deserting him. For how else can one explain the dull sadness of this poem:

"My heart was burned out long ago,  
My bosom is a waste of snow,  
And lonely as a pale lagoon,  
In the dead mountains of the moon.

Could grim Vesuvius in an hour  
Spend all his raging, potent power,  
'Tis he, alone, might feebly know  
How my heart burned out long ago."<sup>1</sup>

In the same year, another volume of verse was published, The Blushful South and Hippocrene, the title having been taken from two lines of Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale". The first stanza in the book:

"Only the dreams are real,  
The false facts fade and die;  
The rare rose-lipp'd ideal  
Defies eternity",<sup>2</sup>

gives the pervading tone of the whole. More and more,

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1. Loveman, Robert, "XIX", Verses, (complete), p. 143.  
2. Ibid, "The Dreams", p. 183.

Loveman's poetry is withdrawing itself from reality.

In this collection of verses a new note appears, that of desire for a woman's love. The following stanza tells its own story:

"We lack love; if we have love  
We have all in all,  
Earth below and stars above,  
And calm and carnival",<sup>1</sup>

and this:

"God send the woman by my way,  
To her my soul will kneel and pray;  
She may allay with her sweet art  
The hell that rages in my heart".<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes his thwarted desire makes him cynical and despairing. There is a song, "Worm Dust", ending:

"Doth old relentless Nature know  
Man from another worm?"<sup>3</sup>

Another, "Sun Song", praises the "tubbed wight", Diogenes, and still another, "To Cerberus", cries out:

"Thou triple-headed hound beside  
The brazen gates of hell!  
Come watch before the portals wide  
Of my soul's citadel.

Here burns a sullen, fiercer fire,  
Oceans can ne'er subdue;  
Ambition, passion, love desire,  
Molten to one vast hue".<sup>4</sup>

It is a futile volume, full of bitterness and long-

1. Loveman, Robert, "Love", Verses, (complete), p. 189.
2. Ibid, "The Woman", p. 195.
3. Ibid, "Worm Dust", p. 197.
4. Ibid, "To Cerberus", Verses, p. 191.

ing. The few Nature lyrics included are, for the most part, unconvincing. Probably the best of the latter is "Evening Song", though even here the imagery is exaggerated:

"Night is a deep black rose,  
Steep'd in sweets to the lees,  
Full of the loves and woes  
Of swarming starry bees.

Lo, now, upon the air,  
Forth from her dusk cocoon,  
Fragile, and faint, and fair,  
Flutters the white moth moon".<sup>1</sup>

It is the tragedy of Loveman's life that he was rarely under the right influences at the right time. In his Dalton home, where the protective love of his mother gave him a feeling of comfort and security, he missed the stimulating influences of the city, whereas when he was in New York he was invariably overcome by nostalgia. Only in the three winters of 1899, 1900, and 1901, when his mother was with him in New York, did he even approach the accomplishment of any really significant work. Now, in the fulness of his manhood, when he should have been producing his best poetry, he was wasting rich hours in unproductive dreaming and vain desire.

If only, at this time or earlier in life, Loveman had experienced a grand passion, a possibility of which

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Evening Song", Verses, p. 191.

the intensity of emotion in The Blushful South and Hippocrene undoubtedly shows him capable, his poetry might have attained to real power and vitality. Denied this, he turned to his lectures and his concerts, which served him both as a means of livelihood and as an outlet for his repressed emotions.

Occasionally, in Songs from a Georgia Garden, Loveman reveals a true romanticist's love for children. Because of the attachment which small folk invariably formed for him, his fellow townsmen gave him Longfellow's title of "the children's poet". One of Loveman's favorite ways of amusing both himself and the children of the neighborhood, and at the same time of getting his daily exercise, was to take a group of them on a "Nature walk". In the course of the walk, various games would be played. Perhaps they would see who could find the most unusual natural phenomenon,-- some strangely shaped rock, or queer-colored leaf. At the end of the walk, the winner of the game would be given a quarter.

The peace and quiet of Loveman's idle life in Dalton were much envied by Will Harben, who, tired of New York and the grind of writing a novel a year, often came to the little town to spend the summer. No doubt Loveman enjoyed his leisurely existence, with the occasional visits from his old friend; but he found that inspiration does not

flourish in idleness, and he received little money from his poetry during these years of inactivity.

Just when he conceived the idea of going on the concert platform is hard to say. The few recitals of his poetry which he had given before various clubs had made him very popular with these small gatherings, and it was at the urgent request of many friends and admirers that he set about making his plans for a stage debut.

The first public concert in which he took part was held in the high school auditorium of Dalton during September of 1908,<sup>1</sup> and so far as we can learn, there was no charge for admission. The program was simple, -- merely four groups of selections by Loveman, interspersed with musical numbers by other local artists. It was a momentous occasion for the poet, for it was after his great success with his own townspeople that he definitely decided to go "on the road".

All during the next year he wrote letters to friends in both neighboring and distant towns, trying to arrange for recitals. A lecture was given at West Point, Georgia, in December of 1908, and next month another was given at the Georgia Centenary Female College.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the popularity of the "Rain Song" continued to grow. Harben wrote

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1. Program in Loveman's scrap-book.

2. Repass, J. W., letter to Loveman, January 7, 1909.

from New York to tell Loveman how a popular singer in Carnegie Hall had sung it five times as an encore in the course of one evening's concert. And Loveman continued to be besieged by letters congratulating him and often asking for autographed copies of the "Rain Song" or biographical data. In September of 1909 he was requested to send a short sketch of his life to the International Who's Who.

The Robert Loveman Concert Company came into existence in the fall of 1909, after arrangements for bookings and proceeds had been made with S. R. Bridges of the Alkahest Lyceum System.<sup>1</sup> This company was composed of Loveman and two women, a singer and a harpist. The beginning of the concert tour was rather disheartening. Loveman traveled alone to Cartersville, Georgia, where the concerts were to begin and where the members of the company were to meet Mr. Bridges for their last instructions.

Arrived in Cartersville, Loveman found the harpist, Mrs. Estelle Blake, "a blond in a green dress and a hairy hat", melancholy and home-sick. He wrote his family, describing their first encounter:

"If I hadn't met her-- and stuck to her until Bridges returned from a trip--she would be back in Chicago now. She got homesick-- and was mad all the time. Yesterday at dinner-- and a good one-- she cried until I got her in a better mood. She is not so young or beautiful--

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, November, 1909.

but a good musician and strictly biz'ness".<sup>1</sup>

But the third member of the trio, Miss Lucille Dale, soprano, was "young and slight and fair",<sup>2</sup> a decided contrast to gloomy, temperamental Mrs. Blake. Lucille, unlike the older woman, had never before been on a concert tour, and was afraid she might learn to "drink and do like actresses".<sup>3</sup>

Loveman seems, on the whole, to have been very much pleased with his associates.

"Both women have fine long cloaks of some kind of fur and look stunning",<sup>4</sup>

he wrote, and again,

"I get along beautifully with my ladies-- by letting them alone-- and they come to me".<sup>5</sup>

After the disheartening beginning, the little company appears to have been quite a success, taking in fifty or sixty dollars each night. Bridges wrote saying that Georgia was "all booked up",<sup>6</sup> and at the end of the first week, Loveman told his family,

"I have only been out one week-- six shows-- but I feel like an old manager. We haven't had a hitch-- lost a train-- or a shoestring-- and yet I'm not supposed to be practical".<sup>7</sup>

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, December 1, 1909.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Ibid., November, 1909.
  6. Bridges, S. R., letter to Loveman, December 8, 1909.
  7. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, November, 1909.

A week or so later he wrote:

"Mrs. Blake calls me Loveman and has ceased to weep. I like this life-- for a change. You are moving constantly, and the first thing done when we get to a town is to find out how we leave. The hotels are good-- usually-- and it is not what to eat-- but what not".<sup>1</sup>

From all reports, Loveman invariably won his audiences.

"I've got my stage legs already", he wrote on the first of December, "-- and if they don't encore-- I make 'em".<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes, of course, there were trying nights. He wrote on December seventh,

"We had a strenuous time last week-- up at three A. M. to catch trains. Took a 'front freight' at midnight to make connections-- and then the Widow Blake fell by the wayside and was too ill to appear. Miss Dale and I did extra stunts-- and got the fifty dollars all right".<sup>3</sup>

One time Mrs. Blake's skillful fingers saved the performance.

"Last night we had no piano, but Estelle kept her harp flying and Lucille warbled and I argued, and the audience applauded handsomely".<sup>4</sup>

At another time, it was Loveman's own ingenuity that saved

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, December 1, 1909.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

them.

"Everybody had babies with them, and one bleated all the time I was on. I suggested that if it would keep time I wouldn't object to the accompaniment".<sup>1</sup>

It would not have been hard to keep time to one of Loveman's speeches. His voice rose and fell in musical cadences, and the few samples of his oratory left to us, composed in the flowing, sentimental style of the period, are remarkably rhythmic. Nearly all his programs were more or less extemporaneous, but sometimes he jotted down, in his dashing, almost illegible hand-writing, the prose transitions between the selections he intended to recite, or the introduction and conclusion of his speech. The following introduction, preserved in an old scrap-book, shows his method of approach to the recital of his first selection:

"Ladies and Gentlemen:--

When words that have loved each other since the birth of language, meet and clasp in fond embrace-- 'tis Poetry. Poetry is Philosophy set to music, the sweetest thought, bound round with rarest melody,-- and happy indeed is he, aye thrice blessed the man, who can leave, as a rich legacy to the world, a cluster of what Mr. Tennyson calls, 'Those jewels five words long, that on the stretched fore-finger of all time, sparkle forever'.

I have arranged my program this evening so that we may have something gay as well as grave, and if the verses are not profound, let us trust that they will at least be diverting.

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, December 7, 1909.

Some years ago, in the early dawn of winter morning, I wrote the song that I shall first say this evening. It was published in Harper's Magazine, and has had several musical settings, etc."<sup>1</sup>

Nearly always, as Loveman frankly stated, his purpose was merely to entertain. Most of the selections he chose were already favorites with his audiences,-- such popular southern poems, for instance, as Frank L. Stanton's "Mighty Lak' a Rose"; Sidney Lanier's "Marsh Song: At Sunset", beginning

"Over the monstrous, shambling sea,  
Over the Caliban sea"

and his "The Stirrup-Cup"; and Belle R. Harrison's "Pomp's Defense", better known by its refrain, "I stole dem britches ter be baptized in".

To the more cultured audiences of the larger towns, he recited fewer dialect poems and a greater number of his own favorites. On such occasions he rarely omitted poems from his "dear, delightful Robert Herrick" and "gallant Dick Lovelace", as he called them, or a selection or two from Keats and Shelley. Burns's dialect poems were often used, as were Browning's song from "Pippa Passes", beginning "The year's at the Spring", Wordsworth's famous sonnet, "The world is too much with us", and Shakespeare's "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes". Sometimes

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1. Loveman, Robert, scrap-book.

the selections were less well known,-- a lyric of Bourdillon's, beginning

"The night has a thousand eyes,  
The day but one",

Goldsmith's "When lovely woman stoops to folly"; Walter Savage Landor's "Rose Aylmer"; or some polished gem from Emily Dickinson. Interspersed among these would be poems of his own composition, dialect or local color poems such as "Gudger's News Depot", and travel poems like "In Venice on the Rialto" being favored among the small towns, while more serious selections from Gates of Silence were added to these or substituted for them in the larger places. Always, of course, there was the "Rain Song", the foundation stone of his success.

The concerts lasted on through December. Toward Christmas time Loveman began to think of home and wrote that he had added a Christmas poem of Stanton's to his repertoire, quoting from it,

"Run home! dat's whar de Christmas--  
Dar, whar yo' Mammy's callin' you".

A little later he wrote:

"Leave my window open Friday P. M.-- and a fire-- and if I come in at midnight-- I'll hang my stocking outside my door. Tell the superior Vizier to have quail and bubble-water in abundance-- and we'll have an old Holly-day".

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, December 14, 1909.

After Christmas the company went on to Brunswick, Georgia, on the coast, where they had an unusual success. From there they pushed on into Florida. About the middle of January, their circuit finished, they disbanded. Then Loveman, his pockets well filled, could go home to spend a few quiet months with his mother.

He gave a few concerts or recitals during 1910, but his most important engagement of this year was a series of ten lectures on American Poetry given at Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia. These lectures, occasioning him much study and forethought, were given from six-thirty to seven-thirty in the evenings and occupied the last two weeks of November. College credit was given to the students who attended, and at the close of the course, the president of the school, Dr. H. J. Pearce, professed himself very much pleased with the results.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the winter passed uneventfully, and Loveman and his mother spent the following spring in Tuscaloosa, the only important incident of the visit being that Loveman contracted a severe case of the grippe. Even in these trying circumstances, his characteristic humor did not fail him. He wrote to Annie, graphically,

"Of course they all say I'm much better,  
but I feel as though I had climbed all over

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1. Pearce, H. J., letter to Loveman, November 30, 1910.

a cyclone-- and gotten into the middle of it",

and

"Look out for me in a week or so if I get stronger. Just now I'm a good deal wilted".<sup>1</sup>

Later, convalescent in Dalton, he made himself a little booklet from a piece of writing paper, on the back of which he wrote:

Report  
of  
Patient No. 979  
Sanatorium  
"Robin's Nest"  
22 N. Thornton Avenue

Inside, he wrote diagonally across the page:

Convalescent--

Have cut out--

Nicotine  
Moonshine  
Strong Maxwell House  
Fat Foods 2

In the summer of 1911, the Harbens, with their two children, visited in Dalton; and the greatest sorrow of Harben's life came when an attack of appendicitis, neglected until it was too late, caused the death of his dearly loved oldest son. This tragedy, for which Harben

1. Loveman, Robert, letter to Annie, May 10, 1911.
2. From Robert Loveman's scrap-book.

always blamed himself, cast a shadow over the rest of his life and plunged him into a rapt, almost superstitious mysticism. Devouring Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, he went even further into transcendental theories than any of these, and sometimes even believed that he could commune with Eric's spirit. Loveman by no means shared all his friend's mystic beliefs, but he was undoubtedly influenced by them. Harben induced him to reread Whitman and was glad when Loveman pronounced the latter a "great man". Loveman, Harben said, was himself like Whitman in his mystic feeling for nature.<sup>1</sup>

It was in the following spring, while spending a few days with R. J. H. DeLoach, Professor of Experimental Plant Breeding at Experiment, Georgia, that Loveman met Whitman's one-time friend, John Burroughs, who also came to visit DeLoach. Since Loveman, with his propensity for old-fashioned ideas and pleasures, really was closer kin to Burroughs's generation than to his own, the two men quickly became friends. The chief bond between them was their mutual love of nature, a love shared by DeLoach. Burroughs was delighted with Loveman's Gates of Silence, which expressed many of his own beliefs.

He said of it:

"No other singer of our time has essayed

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1. Harben, Will N., letter to Loveman, December 15, 1911.

deep-sea soundings into the problems of human destiny and done it with a plummet of four-line stanzas, with great ease and gayety of heart, as has Loveman in his Gates of Silence. Much of it is as good as is the best in Omar Khayyam".<sup>1</sup>

The days at Experiment were spent in rambles through the woods and in long discussions about death and immortality. These discussions had their fruition in a long series of letters between Loveman and Burroughs. Unfortunately, these were sent to Burrough's secretary, Clara Barrus, after his death and were never returned.<sup>2</sup> Proof enough, however, of the former's high opinion of Loveman and his work was his request that the "Rain Song" be read at his own funeral,<sup>3</sup> and his enthusiastic preface to Loveman's last book, Sonnets of the Strife.

Though Loveman had continued to write poetry at odd times between concert or lecture tours, his On the Way to Willowdale, published in 1912, shows no vestige of originality or even of technical mastery. The sentimental whimsies of his earliest youth cannot compare with this stanza:

"May the month, and Jean the lass,  
 Oh, the magic moon!  
 In April, Lucia like a fuchsia,  
 Who will come in June?"

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1. Burroughs, John, foreword to Loveman's Sonnets of the Strife, p. vii.
  2. Barrus, Clara, letter to Loveman, September 20, 1921.
  3. Greenwald, Carrie, letter to Loveman, May 17, 1921.

Will it be dark Carlotta,  
 With her kisses manifold,  
 Or the silken siren Irene,  
 With her high heap'd hair of gold?"<sup>1</sup>

The following stiff and conventional sonnet,  
 "Keats", is illustrative of the more bookish poems:

"Fair English lad, in thought and dream, a Greek,  
 Dead in the blush of thy young summer prime,  
 When can o'er-mast'ring and remorseful Time,  
 Another send like thee to greatly speak?  
 Thou dead! forever from the Darien peak  
 Thy fame is wafted in sonorous chime,  
 And ev'ry nightingale of ev'ry clime,  
 Warbles thy woe from his enamoured beak;  
 Thy sweet name 'writ in water?' lo, the years  
 Of Hero and Leander, all are thine,  
 And ev'ry fond maid's breast doth softly swell  
 Mute kneeling at thy song-embowered shrine;  
 Poet, who hath us meshed in magic spell,  
 Thine the fond tribute of our grateful tears".<sup>2</sup>

On reading this volume, one is compelled to agree  
 with Loveman's own lament:

"Bereft am I, Urania nevermore  
 Doth come as was her wont to comfort me;  
 I am undone, sold into slavery.--"<sup>3</sup>

And these verses appeared on the very eve of the great  
 modern "Renaissance" of American poetry! A few months  
 more, and Amy Lowell, Vachel Lindsay, James Oppenheim,  
 Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, John Gould Fletcher,  
 Carl Sandburg, and many others would be startling the  
 literary world with strange, direct utterances that, though

1. Loveman, Robert, "Song", Verses, (complete), p. 240.
2. Ibid, "Keats", p. 244.
3. Ibid, p. 248.

often crude and experimental, came "not only closer to the people's soil but nearer to their souls".<sup>1</sup> Judged by the purging standards of this revolutionary poetry of a new age, the faded musings of Robert Loveman might well have belonged to a long-departed generation.

Loveman gave scattered recitals all during 1912. A big one in Chattanooga was arranged by Rabbi Julian H. Miller of that city, and another in Mobile by his "old pardner", Leon Schwartz, who had just become mayor.<sup>3</sup> In the fall he made a lecture tour through Georgia, this time unaccompanied. Though much of the spirit of adventure had vanished when the newness had worn off, Loveman still found time occasionally to write home humorous little comments on his experiences. He wrote from Athens, Georgia:

"My last evening was in a church. Brother Mouzin called on Brother somebody to pray (though first the congregation sang 'Lord preserve us' or something like that-- ) and the Reverend prayed that the Lord would help the speaker to illuminate the dark bi-ways, high-ways, and other ways. As I usually 'cuss' some in my talk-- I had to be careful and substitute bless for damm".<sup>3</sup>

Usually, though, the letters written during this trip were shorter and more business-like, relating to the probable route to be taken, or to the laundering of his

1. Untermeyer, Louis, preface to Modern American Poetry, p. 15.
2. Miller, J. H., letter to Loveman, November 11, 1912.
3. Schwartz, Leon, letter to Loveman, May 28, 1912.
4. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, October, 1912.

pleated shirt-front. He was a little homesick, too, and wrote Annie:

"Tell Ma i miss her and if she were just along to bum with me I wouldn't mind tripping around far far from home. When I get to Atlanta-- if she'll come down and spend the day-- say next Saturday-- Bert and I will give her a Yam Kippur with fish and beer to burn".<sup>1</sup>

In 1913, Loveman again toured Georgia. From Griffin, where a lecture had been arranged for him by DeLoach, he made a short trip to Experiment. Burroughs was again visiting DeLoach, and the pleasant friendship of the previous year continued to ripen.

Loveman's performance in Griffin was enthusiastically praised by DeLoach, who gladly complied with his friend's request for a recommendation to Dr. H. M. Leipziger, Supervisor of Lectures for the Schools of New York City.

"He is a polished scholar, and a finished lecturer, and certainly never fails to entertain. He has lectured here before the University Club, of which I happen to be president at the present time, and before the State Normal School, and Lucy Cobb Institute, located in the city, and has pleased and instructed his audiences. Of his poems you already know. He uses them in his lectures with skill and good taste, and always with modesty and without the least offense".<sup>2</sup>

But Loveman did not succeed in obtaining a position in New York, nor could he obtain one with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau of Chicago. During 1915 he gave highly com-

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1. Loveman, Robert, letter to family, October, 1912.

2. DeLoach, copy of a letter to Dr. Leipziger, February 5, 1931.

mended lectures at Martha Berry's Mountain School, where he was presented with a beautiful blue bowl by the pupils; at Emory College, where he visited his friend Wightman F. Melton, the librarian; and at the rebuilt Oglethorpe University, where he participated in the laying of the cornerstone. But his lecturing days were practically over.

## Chapter IV

### Last Years

The year 1913 marked the emergence of the new poetry, with its graphic, idiomatic diction, its emphasis on descriptive detail, and its revolutionary subject matter. In the plastic medium of free verse, this poetry attempted to express the speed-loving, scientific spirit of an industrial age. It revolved against the very things that Robert Loveman stood for: the old poetic diction, the preoccupation with personal feelings, and the limitation of subject matter to the outworn romantic themes. For the new poetry took all life for its province.

The mushroom-like growth of the modern free-verse movement was hastened by the event of the World War, which sharpened the poet's emotions and made them say things they might never have said in peace-time. Amy Lowell, in such poems as "Bombardment", tried, in her new, flexible polyphonic prose, to express the horrors of the conflict. Carl Sandburg, in a few vivid images like "Buttons", "A Million Young Men", and "Murmurings in a Field Hospital", conveyed grim bits of stark tragedy. Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, H. H. Gibson, Rupert Brooke and others wrote agonized lines from the shadow of the trenches.

Even Robert Loveman, in the quiet seclusion of the "Robin's Nest", was stirred as he had never been stirred before. But his last volume, Sonnets of the Strife, highly as it was praised by John Burroughs, reveals only too clearly the inadequacy of Loveman's old-fashioned poetic language and conventional modes of thought. The "breathing billows" and "fiery firmament" of the stanza below seem almost ludicrous when contrasted with the realistic diction of the modern poets:

"The fleets of air that journey fair, on joyous mission bent,  
 Now fling their death darts flaming, from the fiery firmament;  
 Where soft the ocean billows breathe, or where the breakers swell,  
 Squat on their hips, the battleships, are baying hounds of hell."<sup>1</sup>

And although we cannot doubt the sincerity of the emotion in the following sonnet, "Our Days", with its attempt at realism, the classical and Biblical imagery detracts from our appreciation of the thought:

"Our days are not for puny men or things,  
 For pigmy thought or idle prose or rhyme,  
 Blazoned upon the red shield of our time,  
 Behold the death throes of the grappling kings;  
 War's cauldrons hot with hatred venomings,  
 Europe clad in bloody garb of grime,  
 Her sons steeped deep in filth, disease, and slime  
 Mid livid guns' tumultous thunderings;

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Brothers", Sonnets of the Strife, p. 3.

A creeping, crawling, cringing peace then comes  
Behind the bluster of the blatant drums;

There is no God of battle; Satan's throne  
Is builded by the souls who cherish war,  
Hell groans with music of the dying moan,  
Its mad dominion all one hideous scar".<sup>1</sup>

Another sonnet, "World War", is less cluttered with  
antique diction:

"The kings are going, there will be no kings  
When compt shall come for all this bloody day;  
Out of the carnage and the sanguine fray  
Are looming portents of compulsive things;

Vast are the tidings my Marconi brings,  
The heirs of Hapsburg banisht in dismay,  
The Romanovs are fleeing ashen gray,  
The children starve, there are bread riotings,

The house of Hohenzollern is laid low,  
The kings are going, let them swiftly go;

A stricken world in horror and despair  
Sickens of hate and venomd mutterings,  
Of court and clique, and damned intrigue there,  
The kings are going, there must be no kings!"<sup>2</sup>

But the book as a whole is, in both thought and utterance, not far removed from the verse produced by the Civil War. The latter often contained pictures fully as realistic as those in Loveman's war poetry. Take for example this passage from Theodore O'Hara's "The Charge at Balaklava":

". . . the dead of hostile races  
Slumber, slaughtered in their places:  
All their rigid, ghastly faces  
Spattered hideously with gore".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Loveman, Robert, "Our Days", Sonnets of the Strife, p.28.
  2. Ibid, "World War", p. 10.
  3. O'Hara, Theodore, "The Charge at Kalaklava", Three Centuries of Southern Poetry, p. 137.

After all, in Sonnets of the Strife just as in his more characteristic works, Loveman is merely a belated romanticist with a typical romanticist pity for the wounded and suffering, -- a follower of the shadow of dead poets in an age when even those shadows had ceased to be of real importance. Some of his war poems were written before America entered the lists in 1917 and were recited to various audiences in an attempt to spread the doctrine of peace, a peace which Loveman must have desired even more heartily than the great majority of people because of his deep love for everything German.

Neither the poems nor the lectures, however, attracted very much attention, and, feeling that his popularity was declining, Loveman withdrew more and more from active participation in public affairs. Annie Loveman's marriage in 1913 to Louis Crawford of Dalton left only Robert Loveman and his mother in the "Robin's Nest", and the two were constantly together. Loveman now spent much time in his vegetable garden, making a practice of leaving prettily tied clusters of radishes, greens, or cauliflowers at the front doors of his friends' houses on his way to town in the early mornings. Sometimes a clever note or poem would be hidden in the bouquet.

While Loveman was away on his lecture tours, a new

and extraordinary family had moved to Dalton from Canada, the Mortimer E. Judds. There had arrived one day on bicycles a tall, stern-looking man, a large, middle-aged woman, and a young man who was their son. Seeing a pretty piece of woodland on the outskirts of Dalton that struck their fancy, they immediately bought it and erected a large, pretentious house. Soon afterward there developed the strangest friendship imaginable between Robert Loveman, impractical, almost penniless poet, and Mortimer Judd, super-practical, immensely wealthy curtain-pole magnate.

Mrs. Judd, with her shrewd, forceful, and determined character and her kind heart, became a leader in club and social-service work, but, resourceful as she was in other respects, she could not always manage her husband. Robert Loveman was the only person who could do that. How Loveman managed to perceive the warmth and kindness beneath Judd's hard exterior will remain a mystery. It may have been that he pitied the man, for Judd seemed lonely and was considered something of a crank by his neighbors. However, it is certain that Loveman immediately set about the task of cheering up his new acquaintance, having already had much experience in dispersing Will Harben's fits of gloom and depression. Judd responded readily to the poet's overtures. And thus grew this close though unusual friendship.

In the spring and summer they went on many pleasure excursions in Judd's car, often accompanied by young Herbert Judd or Mrs. Loveman. Sometimes they went swimming or fishing, but usually Chattanooga was the destination. On the latter occasions, they would always arrive in time for dinner, then go to a movie or a musicale, and come back to Dalton the same night.

Mortimer Judd was a silent, uncommunicative man, and if the least thing happened to displease him, he would retreat into his shell and sulk during the entire trip, often not speaking a single word until they were back in Dalton, when he would rumble out, "Well, see you to-morrow at four". If, on the other hand, he were in a good humor, nothing was too good for his friend. At one of the latter times, Judd decided that Loveman needed some new clothes and refused to leave Chattanooga until the poet had consented to buy a complete new outfit at his expense.

Probably these two years were the happiest of Loveman's life. He had a certain amount of fame, a peaceful home and garden where he could dream to his heart's content, his mother always near him, and the admiration and love of his friends. Feeling that his working days were over, Loveman wrote every little poetry during these last years and spent most of his time in leisurely walks or long conversations with friends.

But the summer of 1919 was the last that Loveman was to spend with the most intimate friend of his life-time, for Will Harben, now old and white-haired, died of pneumonia soon after his departure for New York in August. In his own sorrow, Loveman remembered the grief of Mrs. Harben. She thanked him gratefully for his kindness to her and to her husband during the latter's illness:

"It was so like you to write those spring-time letters to Mr. Harben and want him to come back to the hills, but I thought you'd forget, now that he'd gone".<sup>1</sup>

Before the bitterness of his grief at the loss of his first real friend had worn off, his last friend, Judd, also died. Soon after this second great blow, Loveman happened to meet Mrs. Judd coming out of the bank. She called out that she was looking for him, and when he came, she pressed an envelope into his hand, saying rapidly, "I want you to take this because of what you've been to my husband". Then, before Loveman could stop her, she had stepped into her car and driven away. The envelope contained a check for three hundred dollars.

In this grim winter of 1919, too, as though Loveman had not had his full share of grief, his lovely sister Annie contracted tuberculosis of the bones, a horrible result of the ungraceful and unhygienic pinched-in waistlines

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1. Harben, Mrs. Will N., letter to Loveman, December 15, 1919.

of the nineties. The lingering, incurable disease caused Loveman and his mother almost as much pain as it did the unfortunate Annie, and her death on January 12, 1920, came as a relief from suffering.

In 1921, to add one last drop to his full cup, Loveman's mother fell sick. Mrs. Loveman was a very old woman now, past her eightieth birthday. It was useless to hope that she could survive another winter, even if she recovered from her illness. Realizing this fact, Loveman summoned all his old high spirits and whimsical humor. If his mother must die, then he was determined to make her last years cheerful and beautiful.

When the inevitable time of her death came, on November 12, 1921, Loveman felt that his life, too, was over. It is the opinion of all who knew Loveman that his mother's death had a great deal to do with his own. The peace and security of his home had helped him bear the loss of his sister and friends. Now he had not even a home, though Morris and Linka both tried to make him feel that their homes were his. The one solace for him was his love of the out-of-doors. Often his walks lasted for hours. Probably these long walks also had something to do with his own death. Scarcely more than a year after the death of his mother, Loveman himself became ill. Doctors could not diagnose his disease. Possibly it was akin to chronic

anaemia. He grew steadily weaker, in spite of all that could be done for him. The will to live was gone, and he seemed overcome with intense weariness.

Finally he was unable even to walk, and, in February of 1923, his sister Linka persuaded him to go to Hot Springs, hoping that the change of climate and the health-giving waters would restore his strength. But the hope was vain. At the end of five months, a telegram arrived stating that Loveman could not be expected to live more than a few days.

Morris was the only one of the family who reached Hot Springs before his death. When his brother arrived, Loveman was too weak to talk. He lay with his eyes closed for a long while, and Morris thought that he was unconscious. But he was only dreaming. In the final minutes of his life, so filled in its last years with pain and bitterness, he had gone back to the carefree playtime of his childhood. For just before the end, he opened his eyes and looked at Morris with a gleam of recognition. "Sif sof wix", he said softly. And Morris knew that his brother had slipped away from him for the last time.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Related to author by Morris Loveman, January, 1932.

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## LETTERS:

\* Written to Robert Loveman by friends:

John Burroughs, number unknown, written from 1912 through 1919.

Edna Cain, eleven, written from 1902 through 1906.

R. J. H. DeLoach, seventeen, written from 1899 through 1920.

Mrs. Elizabeth Gordon, ten, written from 1898 through 1905.

Will N. Harben, one hundred and thirty, written from 1891 through 1919.

Mrs. Will Harben, twelve, written from 1900 through 1920.

H. L. Mencken, seventeen, written from 1902 through 1918.

Clinton Scollard, twelve, written from 1894 through 1913.

Patty Thumb, sixty-nine, written from 1896 through 1903.

Elsie Wise, twenty-seven, written from 1896 through 1899.

Written by Loveman to his family:

Thirty-one letters and cards from Europe, 1898.

Thirteen letters from New York, 1898 through 1899.

Twenty-three letters from lecture tours and visits, 1909 through 1915.

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\* This list includes only those of Loveman's friends who kept up a voluminous and extended correspondence with him.

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