Guide to the James Lewis Letters, 1868-1873

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Letters to Annie Law, a teacher and fellow shell collector.

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LITERARY
ANNIE LAW AND FINNIE LAW ANDREWS.
John C. Branner.
In May or June of the year 1850 a young Englishman named John Law embarked on a sailing vessel at Liverpool, England, bound for the United States. With him were his wife and three small children. They landed at Charleston, South Carolina, the following July, and after a few days' delay in that city set out for Maryville, Tennessee.

The Law family, both individually and as a whole, exerted a splendid influence in Blount, Monroe, Knox, and Jefferson Counties, and wherever else they lived in East Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. Mr. Law died shortly after reaching Tennessee, and his wife and children were thrown upon their own resources. How well they met the responsibilities of life is shown by the final results.

The family books that have been preserved form an interesting index of the character of the family. These books include nearly all of the works that were regarded as standard English literature in those days, the works of the best British poets, and periodicals relating to art, painting, and music. In addition to these there are many classics in Latin and Greek. The influence of the family on the tastes and intellectual life of the people of East Tennessee has been very marked, and to this day the names of Annie Law and Fannie Law are honored household names in every town and every county where they lived. Yet strangely enough but little seems to be known of the family or of the personal history of these two remarkable women even by the people among whom they lived so long and so helpfully.

Having lately renewed his acquaintance with the only surviving member of the family, the writer has gathered from her, and from books and papers in her possession, the following details concerning the family, and gives them here in the hope that they may at least refresh the memories of those who knew them, or came under their influence.

John Law was the son of Edmund Law, who was the Vicar of Wittenham in North Cumberland, and was the youngest of a family of seventeen brothers and sisters. The law family was related to Lord Ellenborough, Chief Justice of England, and also to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, and to Thomas Law, Commissioner to Canada. One of Mr. Law's sisters married Sir William Nicolay, who was some time Governor of St. Christopher's, in the West Indies, and of the island of Mauritius. His brother, Richard Law, was also Governor of the island of Malta.

Mrs. Law's maiden name was Ann Haswell. She was brought up at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and was an only child, her only brother having died at the age of ten. She was born in the year 1800, but the family records having been destroyed during the Civil War in the United States, but little further can be learned of her family. From an old family Bible it appears that her grandmother was Ann Drummond, who was born July 27, 1764, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, that her great-grandfather was Thomas Drummond, and that her great-grandmother's name was Esther. Mrs. Law, upon whom the support of the family fell soon after their coming to America, was evidently a woman of culture, of strong character, and of unusual ability and personality. She was an excellent musician, and taught both her daughters music; she drew remarkably well; she was well acquainted with the best English literature. Wherever she and her daughters lived in the South, they were centers of culture and refinement, and everywhere they left the marks of their splendid influence and of their highmindedness.

Mr. Law appears to have migrated to America partly on account of the pressure of high taxes in England, and partly on account of the glowing accounts sent out by land speculators from East Tennessee. One of the properties that appeared to be especially attractive was the Woodlawn Cottage place. Later this was found to be a miserable log cabin on the banks of a small creek in the backwoods of Blount County.

At the time of his coming to America Mr. Law's family consisted of his wife, two daughters, Annie and Fannie, and one son, Robert Edmund. Of these Annie was the eldest, having been born about 1840, while Fannie, the youngest, was born in 1844 at Kingmoor house near Carlisle, in the north of England. Landing at Charleston in July, 1850, they traveled by rail to Dalton, Georgia, where they took bacon wagons returning to East Tennessee from their annual trip to the South, and a few weeks later reached Maryville, in Blount County, East Tennessee.

It was Mr. Law's intention to locate near Montvale Springs, some eight or nine miles east of Maryville, and to establish there a home similar to the homes of English gentlemen. About the first man he met at Maryville was Dr. Isaac Anderson, the founder, and at that time President, of Maryville College, and for some time the family lived in a house belonging to Dr. Anderson about a mile from the town. Later Mr. Law bought a small farm of a hundred acres or so nine miles from Maryville and one mile from Montvale Springs. The region at that time was wild and but thinly settled, and there were no schools. At this place Mr. Law planned to build a house and establish a home for his family, but after the lumber was bought and the foundations of the house were laid he fell ill and died of pneumonia within a few days (1852). The farm remained in possession of his family until about 1878.

After Mr. Law's death the family moved to the town of Maryville and lived with Mr. Wells, a jeweler, who lived on the main street of the town opposite Gen. Wallace's house. Annie, the oldest child, studied Latin and algebra under Dr. Anderson along with his grandchildren, Isaac and Rebecca Anderson, and with Isaac Caldwell of New Market. When Dr. Anderson was no longer able to teach, she studied under Mr. Craig and Rev. Erskine Tedford. Annie Law was but little more than thirteen years of age when she began teaching in Maryville. She had had music under her mother, and Latin under Dr. Anderson, and her first teaching was in the academy building in the upper end of the town, near the old Presbyterian Church.
When she was 15 years of age she went to Sweetwater, East Tennessee, [UNK] and remained there two years. The family lived at Maryville for two or three years, Mrs. Law in the meanwhile giving music lessons, and riding thirty or forty miles a week to meet pupils who lived in the country. At the end of that time they moved to Louisville, Blount County, and later Mrs. Law went to Philadelphia, in Lower East Tennessee, living at Mr. Stanfield’s, where she had her music room. In 1858 (?) Annie Law went from Sweetwater, Tennessee, to Lumpkin, Stewart County, Georgia, where she taught music for one year in the academy. In 1859 she went from Lumpkin to Dandridge, in Jefferson County, Tennessee, and there taught music in the female academy, then under the charge of Mrs. Ann Hynds, until some time after the outbreak of the Civil War. She was there joined by her sister Fannie and they lived at the home of Col. Wm. M. Bradford. Mrs. Law was at Knoxville in the meantime, and in 1861 her daughters moved from Dandridge to Knoxville, Tennessee. They remained in Knoxville only a few months.

Robert Edmund Law, their only brother, died about this time. He was prepared for college by his mother, and he entered the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1858. In 1860 he went to Maryville College, where he was for some time under Professor Thomas J. Lamar. Later he studied medicine under Dr. Frank Ramsay at Knoxville. In May, 1862, he went to Maryville to see about something on their farm, and having been exposed to a drenching rain he was taken ill and died a few days later, May 20, 1862, at the residence of Col. G. W. Mabry. Knox County, Tennessee, where his mother was then governess. His death occurred just at the time when he was to have graduated from Union Jefferson College (originally called Holston College) near Concord, below Knoxville. He was buried in the Presbyterian burying-ground at Maryville beside his father.

After the death of the son in 1862, Mrs. Law and her daughter Fannie moved to Marietta, Georgia, and taught in the family of Col. W. G. McAdoo, while Annie stayed at Sweetwater, Monroe County, Tennessee. Afterwards Annie taught a year at Concord, in Knox County; while there she lived in the family of Col. Pate.

In 1863, Mrs. Law being ill, Annie Law visited her mother and sister at the home of Col. W. G. McAdoo, who then lived near Milledgeville, in Georgia, and she herself taught as governess in the family of Professor Ramsey, near Milledgeville, for some months. On her return from there to East Tennessee she was arrested by the Federal troops on the Little Tennessee River, near McGhee’s ferry, in Blount County, and was kept a prisoner in Knoxville for three months. Although an Englishwoman by birth, having grown to womanhood in the South, her sympathies were naturally with those with whom she was associated. During her imprisonment she was confined to the house of Mr. Parker, next to the Bell House in Knoxville. She was tried on charge of carrying Confederate messages, and was sent out of the Federal lines by way of Bristol, Virginia. At this place she again began the teaching of music the next day. Afterwards she went to Campbell Station in Knox County and taught. During a battle at that place a bomb shell set fire to her room. She again went to Philadelphia in East Tennessee in 1868, and it was about this time that she became especially interested in conchology. Here she was governess in the family of Arch. [UNK]. While living at Concord Annie Law made a trip to Bald Mountain in the Great Smoky Mountain range between North Carolina and East Tennessee in search of land and fresh-water shells. From Concord she went to Jalapa, in Monroe County, and later to Madisonville.

Mrs. Law died in 1871 at Joseph Peck’s, near White Cliff Springs. Annie was then teaching at Jalapa, Monroe County, Tennessee, and her mother had gone there to visit her. On a trip to White Cliff Springs she caught cold and died shortly afterwards of pneumonia. The remains were taken to Maryville and buried beside those of her husband and son at the Presbyterian Church. Annie Law taught next at Haysville, Clay County, North Carolina, and her sister Fannie took her classes at Madisonville, Tennessee.

In 1873 while she was living at Hayesville, North Carolina, she decided to go to California, and she made the trip with Mrs. McCroskey. She went directly to Hollister. At this place she again began the teaching of music the next day. Afterwards she went to Campbell Station in Knox County and taught. During a battle at that place a bomb shell set fire to her room. She again went to Philadelphia in East Tennessee in 1868, and it was about this time that she became especially interested in conchology. Here she was governess in the family of Arch. [UNK]. While living at Concord Annie Law made a trip to Bald Mountain in the Great Smoky Mountain range between North Carolina and East Tennessee in search of land and fresh-water shells. From Concord she went to Jalapa, in Monroe County, and later to Madisonville.

In 1883 Fannie Law married Mr. Belah Sargeant Andrews, a lumber dealer, and settled in Watsonville. Annie Law made her home with Mr. and Mrs. Andrews and continued her teaching as long as her health permitted.

Jan. 12, 1889, Annie Law died at the home of her sister, Mrs. Andrews, in Watsonville; she is buried at that place in the Odd Fellows’ Cemetery, about a mile from the town of Watsonville. She was brought up as a member of the Church of England, but she joined the Presbyterian Church at Dandridge about 1860.

The collection of shells known as the Law collection at Stanford University, consisting of several thousand shells, was made by Annie Law between 1850 and 1889. Her interest in conchology dates from about 1859, when she made the acquaintance of Dr. James Lewis, of Mohawk, New York, thru Col. W. G. McAdoo, in whose family she was teaching in 1858 or 1859. Conchologists encouraged Miss Law to extend her studies and to enlarge her collections by exchange. The shells of East Tennessee and North Carolina were then but little known, and the materials collected by her were of great
importance in the study of the land shells of that region. She was acquainted with many prominent conchologists, among whom were W. G. Binney, of Burlington, New Jersey, Dr. Anthony, of New York, Dr. James Lewis, of Mohawk, New York, F. A. Sampson, of Sedalia, Missouri, and many others both in this country and in Europe. During her visits to the coasts of Florida in 1866, and after she moved to California, she was able to include a large number of the marine forms in her collection.

At the death of Miss Law the collection became the property of her sister, Mrs. Fannie Law Andrews, who has given it to Stanford University on the sole condition that it be preserved and cared for as the Law Collection. It is deposited in the museum of the Department of Geology.

The study of conchology was Annie Law's greatest pleasure, and even when she was on her death-bed, she had a tray full of shells at hand and spent much of her time in studying them.

W. G. Binney, one of the most eminent of American conchologists, said of Miss Law after her death: Her rare intellect, combined with her wonderful musical talent, made her the center of a large and cultivated society, while as a writer she occupied a high position, her poems being remarkable for their pathos and sweetness. While Miss Law will be long and widely missed by those acquainted with her socially, there is a much larger circle who will ever honor her name as that of one of the most devoted conchologists we have ever known. She described no species and wrote no articles on the subject, but she contributed none the less to the advancement of science by collecting material for the publications of others. She was a most generous correspondent, distributing lavishly the many novelties she collected in the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. She first drew attention to the richness of those localities, which have since proved almost a new fauna in land mollusks, collecting eleven species and one genus new to science. As an instance of her enthusiasm, the writer may mention that when he urgently begged her to obtain for him the living animal which had formed the shell of the so-called *Vitrina latissima*, in order to verify its generic position, she undertook a perilous wagon journey of several weeks over mountain roads, camping out at nights; she reached Black Bald Mountain, and found numerous specimens, which enabled the writer from its external and anatomical character to describe the remarkable genus. (American Journal of Science, May, 1889, n. 422.)

Fannie Law Andrews is still living at Watsonville, California. Her husband died Feb. 7, 1897, and she has no children, but she is loved and honored by every one who knows her.

**Note**
The writer will be glad to receive any information that their friends in Tennessee can give regarding any member of the Law family. It should be addrest to J. C. Branner, Stanford University, California.

**Additional Note**
**AT THE GATES OF THE DAWN.**

T. F. C., '09.

In the years long gone at the Gates of the Dawn I stood by the River of Life,
And my heart beat high at the wild birds cry, As I longed for the coming strife,
And I dreamed the long day as the hours past away Of the nations that I should deliver,
When in Life's early morn at the Gates of the Dawn, I stood by the Beautiful River.
And a beautiful swan floated all day long, On the river's silver flood,
And far in the West as it sank to rest, The sun was as red as blood,-
But 'tis gone, all gone,-in the breeze of the morn, The leaves of the aspen quiver,
And I long for the swan at the Gates of the Dawn And the gleam of the Beautiful River.

**Additional Note**
According to Dr. Myra Keen, the Annie Law collection of shells was the first important one we acquired (c 1891.) James Lewis was Annie's teacher and well-known in his day.