ANNIE S SWAN (1859-1943)

Annie Shepherd Swan (8 July 1859 – 17 June 1943) was a Scottish journalist, novelist and story writer. She used her maiden name for most of her literary career, but also wrote as David Lyall and later Mrs Burnett Smith. She was a popular writer of romantic fiction for young women and published more than 200 novels, serials, short stories and other fiction between 1878 and her death in 1943.
Swan was one of seven children of Edward Swan (d. 1893), a potato merchant and farmer, by his first wife Euphemia Brown (d. 1881). They lived at first in Maryfield at the top of Easter Road. After her father's business failed, she attended school in Edinburgh, latterly and briefly at the Queen Street Ladies College (Mary Erskine). Her father belonged to an Evangelical Union congregation in Duke Street Leith (which Annie loved), and then after they moved to Mountskip Farm Gorebridge in the rather less welcoming one in Croft Street, Dalkeith, where Annie played the organ. Free from her father’s stern influence in later life Annie was to turn to the Church of Scotland.

Annie persistently wrote fiction as a teenager, and won second prize in The People’s Journal Christmas competition. Her father helped her publish Ups and Downs: A Family Chronicle. 1 vol. through London’s slightly disreputable Charing Cross Publishing Co., in 1878. This bit of vanity publishing was favourably noticed in the Athenaeum, but her father never recovered the £50 he’d advanced.

Meanwhile Annie began contributing lots of items to the Rev. Howie Wylie’s Christian Leader. Her first serial publication in the People’s Friend was Wrongs Righted (1881). This Dundee periodical Annie considered the mainstay of her career, although she wrote for many others.

Some of her other early published works were

- Into the Haven. 1 vol. London: Blackie, 1883.

These titles were to feature in later reprints:
Then came Annie S. Swan’s first real success:  

*Aldersyde* was the novel that made her reputation. A Borders tale which took two years to create, it was modelled on the stories of Mrs Oliphant, the writer Annie worshipped above all. *Aldersyde* had been rejected by several publishers before being accepted by *Messrs Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier*, of Edinburgh and London “a very old-established house”, in Annie’s words, “just then in need of some new blood infusion. I can never forget the sheer joy of receiving the proof sheets of what I felt sure was to introduce me to the real world of letters. Oliphants promised to produce it handsomely, and Tom Scott, afterwards a well-known R.S.A., was sent out to Yarrow to make sketches for the illustrations.”
The novel was very favourably reviewed. Annie received an autographed letter of appreciation from Lord Tennyson, while the prime minister, William Ewart Gladstone, launching his Midlothian campaign, wrote in a letter to The Scotsman that he thought it as "beautiful as a work of art" for its "truly living sketches of Scottish character". Swan gave the name Aldersyde to a new house she bought in Gorebridge, in celebration of the book’s success in launching her career. She hardly lived there, but loaned it to her sister’s young friends Christina Cusiter (b 1863) and William Torrance (b 1862) who married in 1888.

Annie herself had married the schoolteacher James Burnett Smith (1857–1927) in 1883. They settled at first at Star of Markinch, Fife, where she became close to the Scottish theologian Robert Flint and his sister, who stayed nearby. Annie’s writing continued:

Marion Forsyth: or, Unspotted from the World. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1883.
A Year at Coverley. 1 vol. London: Blackie, 1884.
Climbing the Hill. 1 vol. London: Blackie, 1884.
Carlowrie: or, Among Lothian Folk. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1884.

Carlowrie drew the criticism of the very writer Annie considered her ideal, Margaret Oliphant (1828–1897). Thirty years older than Annie, perhaps hurt by another lavish new illustrated best seller in her own genre, Mrs Oliphant saw something more formulaic, stereotypical and unrealistic than her own nuanced work, yet labelled with the publisher’s Oliphant surname. In reviewing Carlowrie for Blackwoods Magazine in 1884, Mrs Oliphant went so far as to say Swan "presented an entirely distorted view of Scottish life."
With hindsight Annie often felt sorry that she had not written “to her at the time, but I was young and shy in those days and stood in great awe of those who had ‘arrived’ in the world of letters. They were to me enchanted figures. She complained in Blackwood...after...Carlowrie appeared, that my books went into as many editions as French novels, a most regrettable circumstance since they presented an entirely distorted view of Scottish life and character. I could easily have challenged that, for I wrote almost entirely of the life with which I was familiar, and though the judgement of a young girl was necessarily immature, the public had no fault to find with it and asked for more.”

“I met Mrs Oliphant in the flesh only once, some years later, in the house of Principal Tulloch at St Andrews, a gentle sweet-faced old lady with lovely white hair. I don’t know whether she suspected my identity, as I was introduced by my married name. The incident was not mentioned. Anyhow, I should never have had the courage to allude to it. She had a very sad face. I was told it was her habitual expression, and when I read her life, I knew the reason why.”

After Star of Markinch, the couple moved two years later to a flat in Morningside, Edinburgh, where, frugally supported by the income from Annie’s writing, her schoolteacher husband James Burnett Smith was able to fulfil his dream of training to become a medical student. He was an attractive personality: “my husband was a man’s man and made friends wherever he went.” Fellow students visited the flat in droves.

A regular visitor was the poet ‘Surfaceman’, Alexander Anderson, who wrote Songs of the Rail (1878). Snatched out of his regular work as a railway linesman by well-wishers, he now had a job at the University library. “He was one of the best raconteurs I have ever met, and his stories of Scottish character and humour were inexhaustible. He had a dry way of telling them, but at the end his great hearty laugh would roll out, and his dark eyes fairly danced with glee.”

Meanwhile, Annie’s writing and publishing continued apace.

Dorothy Kirke: or, Free to Serve. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1884.
Ursula Vivian, the Sister Mother. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1884.
Adam Hepburn's Vow: A Tale of Kirk and Covenant. 1 vol. London: Cassell, 1885
Late in 1886 the British Weekly began, backed by Hodder & Stoughton. It was ultra-modern and technically-advanced, and it took over the popular Radical Christian niche of the more traditional (and by now declining) Christian World and Christian Leader. Its moving spirit was the Rev. William Robertson Nicoll, till then a minister at Kelso, who quickly became a dominant force in British publishing. While writing for the British Weekly, Annie became better acquainted with S. R. Crockett and J. M. Barrie, whose works like hers were given the unflattering kailyard label, a sly allusion to their parochialism and sentimentality. Two of Annie’s later successes included The Gates of Eden (1887) and Maitland of Lauriston (1891), and continued to owe a debt to the fiction of Mrs Oliphant.

The Strait Gate. 1 vol. London: Partridge, 1887.
“It seems to me, looking back, that Edinburgh in the ‘eighties was a very interesting city, with a more distinctive flavour than it possesses to-day. There was a small select company, if not of the immortals, at least of rare souls, who did much to clarify and sweeten the air.

Among the “rare souls” were the social improvers of the time like Patrick and Anna Geddes – Patrick was a part-time demonstrator for the medical students. Annie and James became “frequent guests at the weird but delightful parties they gave in their flat in the Lawnmarket. They were certainly pioneers in welfare work, their idea being that the only way to bring light and sweetness to slum dwellers was to go and live among them. It was a noble experiment, which bore much fruit in after-days. I remember going to see Mrs Geddes [Anna Morton 1857-1917] one winter afternoon, to find her in a little underground schoolroom, teaching tiny tots, not yet of school age, who would otherwise have been playing in the gutter. Her graceful form in a green gown, her sweet, smiling face, lightened the shadows in that queer place. When their own children came, they had to move their habitation to more salubrious surroundings.”

“There were two women writers in Edinburgh then whom I knew intimately. Mrs Jessie Saxby, wade a reputation by her songs and stories of the Shetland Isles, of which she was a native. She lived in a dear, quaint little house on a slope facing Samson’s Ribs, in the Queen’s Park. She had a unique and striking personality, very clever and charming. There was true Scandinavian fire in her eyes when denouncing wrongs or injustices. She afterwards returned to Shetland, and is alive still.”

Jessie Margaret Edmondstone Saxby (1842-1940) was born at Halligarth, Baltasound, on Unst, her father was a medical doctor and naturalist, her mother a journalist and author, she received little formal education. She married a London-born ornithologist and partner in her father’s Unst medical practice, By 1873 as his widow with five sons to support, Jessie had to rely on the income from her writing and lived and worked in Edinburgh before moving back to Unst in 1890. Jessie’s writing career had started in 1868 when a book of her poems, Lichens from the Old Rock, was published by Nimmo. 46 books were to follow, many published by Oliphant, some romantic fiction, some factual tales, some folklore, but mostly boys’ adventure stories. Around 100 of her articles were printed in newspapers, journals and magazines like Life and Work and The Boy’s Own Paper. She wrote a life of Joe Bell, the original of Sherlock Holmes. Jessie Saxby was a passionate advocate of women’s rights.
The second intimate friend was “Robina Hardy, a very different woman, coufty, kind and genial. She leaped into local fame with a story of the Grassmarket slums called Jack Halliday. She was a delightful creature, full of wit and kindly humanity. It did you good even to look at her. She gave afternoon parties at the old family house in Minto Street, when her sister, who looked exactly as if she had stepped out of an old miniature, used to entertain the company with selections of Scotch airs on the pianoforte.”

Robina Forrester Hardy (1835-1891) was the daughter of a prominent Edinburgh surgeon, her mother’s father was treasurer of the Bank of Scotland, and her brother Henry (1830-1908) -who lived like her in Minto Street- was a foremost architect of Edinburgh’s Victorian city improvement. Robina was a prolific writer, published both by Oliphant and Thomas Nelson & Sons. Among many works were Whin-Bloom (1879), Hester Glen’s Holidays, and How She Spent Them (1881), The Pearl Necklace: A Story for the Young (1881), Little Goldenlocks (1882), Nannette’s New Shoes (1882), Jock Halliday: A Grassmarket Hero (1883), The Children of the Bible (1884), Two Little Wanderers; or, Lead Us Not into Temptation (1884), Tom Telfer’s Shadow: A Story of Everyday Life (1884), Glenairlie; or, The Last of the Græmes (1884), Trot’s Message; or, ‘Whom Have I in the Heaven but Thee?’ (1884), Archie: A Story of Changing Fortunes, and Other Stories (1885), Within a Mile O’ Edinburgh Town (1885), Fickle Fortune (1886), Next Door Neighbours (1886), Annals of Fairfield (1886), Rhoda’s Victory (1887), The Story of a Cuckoo Clock (1887), Hilda’s Fortune (1888), The Good Ship Rover (1888), Kilgarvie (1889), Johnnie; or, ‘Only a Life’ (1889), Diarmid; or, Friends in Kettletown (1889), Fanny’s Old Frock (1890), The Ghost of Greythorn Manor (1891) Tibby’s Tryst; or, ‘I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto the Hills’ (1891), Polly, Who Was ‘Nobody’s Child’ (1891) and His Own Master (1891). She is buried in Greyfriars.

The three friends Robina Hardy, Annie Swan and Jessie Saxby published a compilation of five improving pieces as Vita Vinctis for Oliphants in 1887, the troublesome title changed to the hardly less opaque Life to Those That are Bound in later editions.
These women writers were just the tip of the iceberg. Annie recalled that “there was an exceptional number of bright, clever, interesting women in Edinburgh about that time, with all of whom I had some contact. Feminists were strong too. Mrs Priscilla Bright Maclaren, sister of John Bright, was the leading spirit along with Miss Wigham, a beautiful, demure little Quakeress, who wore the becoming Quaker dress. Though so sweet and even shrinking in her manner, she was an ardent Feminist, and did her best to get me enrolled as a member of the little band working for ‘votes for women’… I never joined the group; I had other things to do. The two Miss Stevensons were prominent in all educational matters, and Miss Flora was the first woman to achieve the chairmanship of the School Board.”

Perhaps Annie and James’s happiest remembered times were with their dear friends Professor Robert Flint (“a giant’s intellect and the heart of a child”) and his sister, in their beautiful house on the outskirts of Edinburgh in Craigmillar Park. Both extraordinarily kind, so attentive to James and the difficulties of his position supported by Annie. “Every distinguished visitor to Edinburgh found their way to that hospitable house. They never left us out. At their luncheon or dinner table we met wonderful people, among them Oliver Wendell Holmes.”
While *St Veda’s*, a story of the Berwickshire Coast, was running in *The Peoples Friend*, Annie received a postcard which he treasured across the years: “*It bears this bitter cry in large handwriting: ‘Don’t let Annie Erskine die. If you do, hanged if I read any more of your old stories.’* After that, what could I do but save Annie’s blameless life?”

“There is a pathetic side to the almost universal demand for a happy ending. Of course it is not art, nor even true to life, in which there are so many loose ends. But it satisfies the primal need for happiness. So everything must be sorted up, the undeserving receive their just deserts, and the good, even if tried beyond endurance, rewarded at the end. I have never had any difficulty in adjusting myself to this demand. Because, as it happens, I feel just that way myself.”
Around 1890, Annie and James moved next to Musselburgh, spending the holiday vacations at the old schoolhouse at Amulree.

There Annie invited Anne Murray Dowager Duchess of Atholl in out of the rain. The amiable Dowager responded with an invitation to her home at The Cottage, Dunkeld. As Lady of the Bedchamber (1854-97) and one of the few intimates of Queen Victoria, she saw to it that Annie was soon to be invited to Balmoral and the Court. While at Musselburgh, Annie had her one and only contribution to *Blackwood* with an article on *The Country Town*.

A Vexed Inheritance. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1890.
Climbing the Hill, and Other Stories. 1 vol. London: Blackie, 1891.

In 1893, Annie and James moved to London after a sojourn in the Black country to give James a taste of family doctoring. Then their two children, Effie (1893–1973) and Eddie (b. 1896), were born.


Annie and her husband settled at first at Camden Square. They met many writers at Baytree Lodge, the Hampstead home of the Robertson Nicolls. “Scots authors were often in the foreground. We met Sir James Barrie frequently, also Ian Maclaren and that stormy petrel Crockett, who was always dashing up from Penicuik to London on some pretext or other. He did not long continue in the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland after he took to the writing life. He was a queer mixture, with something most lovable about him.”

“Among my old letters I find this characteristic one of his:”

‘MY DEAR ANNIE SWAN.-It is Saturday. I have two sermons to preach tomorrow, neither done. I have a story proof to send off. We are in the hubbub of flitting, camping among boxes. But I sit down to write a word of thanks for *Elizabeth Glen*. I don’t often read stories in magazines except those in proof by a
raider called Crockett. But I read your ‘Barbara’ with great enjoyment, standing first on one leg then on the other. Why, Dr. E. Glen well knows. I’m but a poor truth-teller who, like yourself, makes a scanty living by telling lies. I can only state facts. Why do geese sleep standing on one leg? That is the reason I read your ‘Barbara’ standing thus. Seriously, I did enjoy the story, nor have I forgotten the pleasant afternoon with the teller and her lord. Mirree sends her love. – Samuel Rutherford Crockett.’

Crockett was moving from Penicuik’s Free Kirk Manse in West Street round the corner to Bank House in 1894. Later that year he sent an invitation.

“We heard you’ve been in Scotland without coming to see us. We’ve had the Barries and Andrew Lang quite often. But Doctor and Mrs. Burnett Smith never! What do you mean by it? Meeting you is always an oasis in London. Your home life looks so true and fresh and Scottish to me, like coming home unexpectedly after a sea voyage and finding you at the front gate.”

“I am correcting proofs of my Covenanting tale for Good Words. The Lilac [Crockett’s bestselling Lilac Sunbonnet] has done well, twenty-six thousand in twenty days! The world loves a love story yet! Come soon and make happy two plain folk living quietly in the country. – Samuel Rutherford Crockett.”
James Barrie wrote her on the melancholy he felt at party functions, which he avoided: "If I went to any I’d come to yours…Come in and see us any day at teatime. I speak now for two.” “I shall be so pleased if you will come and support me at the Literary Fund Dinner. It is the first time ladies have been invited and I am anxious to make a brave beginning.” A week later he added: “I am slowly recovering from being a chairman. There were some few there on whose sincerity I could take my oath. You were one. It is the salt of our calling, and of all others. -J.M. BARRIE.”

A Lost Ideal. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1894.
The Bonnie Jean and Other Stories. 1 vol. London: Oliphant, 1895.

Not long after Annie arrived in Hampstead, William Robertson Nicoll said to her “You have never got justice done to your work. They’ve set you in a groove. Let us create a new writer in the British Weekly.” And so David Lyall was born. This attempt at a new George Eliot has made for some enduring titles and reprinted editions, from Land of the Leal to The Old Order Changes and A House Divided, The Heritage of the Free 1905, The Loop of Gold 1920, The Seekers 1928, The Land of Beulah 1936, some of them in various editions shown overpage. The
secret identity of David Lyall was only revealed in Annie Swan’s memoirs. When Lyall’s Land of the Leal was published in 1896, her sister went to buy a copy in Edinburgh. “Handling the book she said casually: ‘some say Annie Swan wrote this’. Great surprise and contempt from the salesman, who replied indignantly: ‘Annie Swan! She couldn’t touch it!’ ”.

By 1898, Swan had published over 30 books, primarily novels, many being serially published. She also wrote poetry and stories, and books on advice, politics and religion.


In 1901, *The Juridical Review* reported that Swan's books were the most favoured among female inmates in Irish prisons. In 1906, she was profiled in Helen Black's *Notable Women Authors of the Day.*

Annie became a member of the Society of Women Journalists, founded in 1894 by J. S. Wood, the editor of *The Gentlewoman.* In due course she took her place as its annual President. In its affairs month by month Annie noted “none of the petty jealousies or meanness with which our sex is so often falsely credited, but instead a passion for justice and fair dealing I have never seen excelled.” The society began publishing a thrice yearly house magazine, *Woman Journalist,* in 1910.

In 1904 the Lyceum Club was founded by Constance Smedley, and Annie joined it. This was the first woman’s club in the male club heartland of Piccadilly. Taking over premises that had housed the Imperial Services Club, the Lyceum was intended for ladies engaged with literature, journalism, art, science and medicine, who required ‘a substantial and dignified milieu where they could meet editors and other employers and discuss matters as men did in professional clubs: above all in surroundings that did not suggest poverty’. The Lyceum had a library, an art gallery in which the work of members was displayed, 35 bedrooms and employed hairdressers and sewing maids. The club had international aspirations and branches were formed in Berlin, Paris, Rome and Florence.

While in London and Hampstead Annie and her husband became close friends and neighbours with writer Beatrice Harraden, as well as with Joseph and Emma Parker of the City Temple.

Swan used her maiden name for most of her career, but sometimes used the pseudonym David Lyall and later Mrs Burnett Smith. She was a powerful and respected public speaker involved in social and political causes like the
Temperance movement. Her books and novels on the suffragist movement in Britain, often used her David Lyall pen name, such as Margaret Holroyd: or, the Pioneers (1910). The novel took the form of interconnecting stories that followed a young suffragette, Margaret Holroyd, and dealt with many real problems faced by suffragettes and suffragists: disapproval from family and friends, fear of public speaking, physical exhaustion and ethical dilemmas in a rebellious and sometimes militant atmosphere.

After her husband moved his medical practice and the family left Hampstead for Hertford in 1908, her son Eddie -“Ned” to his friends- died in a shooting accident while packing his little rifle for his next term at Rugby school in September 1910.
Annie was in Scotland at her Kinghorn house in Fife when war was declared in August 1914.

She soon found that “Kinghorn was one of the most unpleasant of the Home Bases to live in during the war”. Its proximity to the naval base at Rosyth and the strategic Forth crossing instantly made it a war zone with gunnery practice, shattered windows, and sentries outside. “The whole of life was transformed into something grim and sinister.” Annie was glad to escape when she could: “I have never pretended that physical courage was my strong suit”.

“Small wonder, as Lloyd George truly said: “For peace-loving countries war is an undiscovered country through which a pathway has yet to be found.””

During the First World War, Swan resigned her editorial position and volunteered for the British war effort. She went to France with her daughter Effie on a morale-boosting tour and also worked with Belgian refugees.

Her house in Hertford was bombed in a Zeppelin raid on October 13, 1915.
In 1916, after the Zeppelin attack, James Burnett Smith left his medical practice in Hertford to serve as a medical officer with the Black Watch.
Two good friends of Annie S. Swan up to and through the Great War were Hall Caine (1853–1931) and Marie Corelli (1855–1924). Both these two had heartily disliked each other from the first. While Caine’s work was extremely popular, Corelli’s novels had sold more copies than the combined sales of her contemporaries, including Arthur Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, and Rudyard Kipling.

Caine and Annie Swan met by chance at Douglas Sladen’s party in a Kensington flat: “I found myself jammed in a passage beside a melancholy individual whom I had no difficulty recognising as Hall Caine. We stood there for about twenty minutes talking. At least, he talked and I listened. If you wish to commend yourself to any man, let him talk about himself; all you require to do is to listen with a moderate amount of intelligence. I was prodigiously entertained, for he was an interesting personality, who took himself and his work very seriously. To my surprise I received a copy of The Eternal City and a letter from Greeba Castle in which he thanked me warmly for the delightful conversation we had had at Sladen’s party. There was no conversation, only an oration to an audience of one, but I greatly enjoyed the book and wrote to tell him so. His reply was as follows:

‘GREEBA CASTLE, ISLE OF MAN

‘MY DEAR ANNIE SWAN.–I am addressing you by the name whereby the world knows you. Your letter came at a moment when I was feeling greatly depressed under the wilful, as well as, in some cases, unconscious misrepresentation to which I am being exposed on all sides. So warm, so tender, so sincerely felt a tribute to my book (The Eternal City) could not fail to bring comfort. I thank you for the impulse that sent it…’

“He somewhat resembled Marie Corelli in temperament. They were both self-centred and supersensitive, imagining slights where none were intended.”
Annie remarked in her Memoirs: “I have suffered all sorts of snubs and slights in my time, some of which would have sent these two good friends of mine crazy...I accepted them as part of the discipline of life. So I have never had any enemies, at least I have not discovered them, whereas Marie Corelli found them on every bush, so to speak...Any talks I had with Marie Corelli both in London and at her lovely house at Stratford-on-Avon were punctuated by tales of persecution and bad treatment she had received, chiefly from persons engaged in her own craft.”
“She was really ‘agin’ most things as well as people. The Government summer-time worried her: ‘I never have conformed to it and never will’ she wrote, ‘except when one is obliged to catch trains it is not necessary to allow Government to force you to get up with a lie, and go to bed with one—i.e. to call 6 a.m. 7, and 9 p.m. 10 p.m.’ But in spite of that queer strain in her I liked her, and always found her both kind and interesting to talk to. She was very proud that King Edward was a reader and admirer of her books, and one of her treasures was a very large signed picture of him which hung in the hall at Mason Croft. She missed a good deal by dwelling on her imaginary wrongs: one by one even friends became estranged: and at the end I am afraid she was one of the loneliest souls on earth.”

Swan visited the United States in January 1918 and again after the armistice at the end of the year. She enjoyed meeting Herbert Hoover, then head of the U.S. Food Administration, and the well-known food manufacturer H.J. Heinz, and she lectured on the necessity for conserving food on the American home front as well as informing the American public of Britain’s wartime contributions. Two successful plays, Getting Together by John Hay Beith (Ian Hay) and The Better ‘Ole by Bruce Bairnsfather, were written for the occasion.
While in the United States, Annie wrote on the cultural differences between women in Britain and the United States in *As Others See Her: An Englishwoman’s Impressions of the American Woman in War Time* (1919).

Contrasting publishers: Kelly, Hodder and Pearson reprints, 1920

Swan was an active Liberal throughout her life, and a well-known moderate suffragist. Shortly after the passage of Representation of the People Act 1918 gave women the vote in Britain, she was the first female candidate when she stood unsuccessfully for the Maryhill division of Glasgow in the general election of 1922 as an independent Liberal (a follower of Asquith) rather than conservative coalition one (a follower of Lloyd-George).

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General Election 1922: Glasgow Maryhill Electorate 34,622
Following her defeat, the Women’s Freedom League claimed that Swan and other female candidates would have been elected under proportional representation system as seen in Ireland, Netherlands and Germany.

Starting in 1924, Swan ran another penny weekly *The Annie Swan Annual*. She also wrote several popular novels during this time including *The Last of the Laidlaws* (1920), *Closed Doors* (1926) and *The Pendulum* (1926).

The Pendulum was written at the special pleading of Sir Ernest Hodder Williams to illustrate the effect of the war on family life. “I did not particularly want to write such a book and told him so. I had seen so much of war’s deadly aftermath, had been behind the scenes in so many tragic, broken lives, that, as I told him, it could not be a pleasant book, that is, if it held the mirror up to life, even if in only a minor and guarded degree. However he brought so much pressure to bar that I wrote the book. Most of it is true, though of course it was necessary to camouflage, even to minimise, the actual happenings.”

The Pendulum was quite well received. It sold about 10,000 copies. “Some reviewers applauded the courage they did not expect from a person like me.”

But its effect on Swan’s usual readership was curious and in some respects disastrous. She had always been regarded as a safe writer. Now this plain tale of wartime temptations and difficulties assailing ordinary people shocked not a few and raised a flutter in the dovecotes. “It more than shocked; it alarmed my public.” They were quick to express their strong disapproval. One group met together to pray that Annie S. Swan might be restored to the right way. Another concluded: *she has let us down.*

After James Burnett Smith’s death in 1927, Swan and her daughter left Hertford and returned to Scotland, settling in Gullane, East Lothian.
In 1930, Annie S. Swan received the CBE in recognition of her contribution to literature. A lifetime admirer of Gladstone, Asquith and Lloyd George, she also remained involved in politics, becoming a founding member of the Scottish National Party and serving as its vice president.

Swan's autobiography *My Life* appeared in 1934, published by Ivor Nicholson & Watson, who were turning out new editions of the novels at the same time.

Annie chose these words of George Bernard Shaw to introduce it:

“This is the true joy of life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mightly one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clad of ailments and grievances; complaining that the work! will not devote itself to making you happy.”

George Bernard Shaw.
She was happy to ascribe much of her success to hard work and the habit of early rising which she had learned in her early days of animal husbandry at Mountskip.

Annie S. Swan’s *The Land I Love* appeared in 1936. Her immense popularity and importance to Scotland’s identity was not lost on National Party leaders like Andrew Dewar Gibb and William Power.

Power, the journalist-historian of Scotland’s literary tradition, campaigner for the literary renaissance, president of Scottish PEN from 1935 to 1938, and leader of the Scottish National Party 1940–42, told her in a letter of 31 October 1936 that: *We have to remember that Scotland was lost, really lost, for the space of nearly two generations, and that when she was found again she had to be ‘recommended’ by degrees to people who had passed through the dreadful fires of the mid-Victorian era. You it was who did most to bring back the real Scotland to the apprehension of the victims of, let us say, a soul-less capitalism – and to bring them back with all their fine qualities of affection, fidelity and patience, to Scotland. It was a marvellous achievement for which you can never get all the credit you deserve.*
In 1941 Annie published These Are Our Masters and in November of that year during the dark days of the war in North Africa, she put together a collection of 24 Collected Short Stories published by James Clarke & Co. London and dedicated from Aldersyde at Gullane to “Dear Nan and her household at Milton; who showed so much kindness to a grateful, wartime refugee”.

Her final published work was an article for Homes and Gardens, "Testament of Age", in March 1943. It drew on conclusions she had already set out in the second-last chapter of My Life. She died of heart disease three months later at her home in Gullane on 17 June.

A collection of personal correspondence, The Letters of Annie S. Swan (1945), was edited by Mildred Robertson Nicoll (daughter of the British Weekly’s founder) and published two years later. Annie S. Swan’s output had been immense and partly because of this her literary reputation reached a low ebb in the aftermath of her later years. More recently, over the last quarter century, her contribution has been more positively reassessed and many of her novels have been reprinted.
ANNIE S. SWAN EXHIBITION IN PENICUIK TOWN HALL SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2016
This exhibition is available in full on the internet at www.kosmoid.net/gorebridge

See Annie Swan contemporary women writers on kosmoid at MONA CAIRD (1852-1932)
MARY Lady JEUNE (1849-1931) and the encyclopaedic NOTABLE SCOTTISH WOMEN
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