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Lawrence of Arabia Memoir Reaches \$62.5K at Swann Galleries' Literature Auction

New York— First editions and inscribed copies filled the shelves at **Swann Galleries'** May 16 auction of **19th & 20th Century Literature**. The sale broke several auction records and encompassed a variety of genres, dates and media. The trifurcated Books department (specializing in Art Books and Early Printed Books as well as Literature), is the oldest at Swann Galleries, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in March.

The top lot of the sale was a complete privately printed edition of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 1926, by T.E. Lawrence, the inspiration for the classic film *Lawrence of Arabia*. The stunning tome, bound in green leather, boasts 65 plates and color illustrations by contemporary artists. The present copy was inscribed by Lawrence and given to his dentist, Warwick James; it was purchased by a collector for \$62,500*.

An auction record was achieved for the complete set of 12 volumes of *The Scourge; or Monthly Expositor of Imposture and Folly*, 1811-16, illustrated by George Cruikshank. This was only the third complete set ever to appear at auction; the final, twelfth volume is extremely scarce due to the dwindling subscriber numbers towards the end of the periodical. The set was especially unusual because it contained the rare suppressed plate of *A Financial Survey of Cumberland, or Beggars Petition*, 1815, which overtly suggested the disgraced Duke of Cumberland had murdered his valet, in both its censored and uncensored state. After breakneck bidding, a collector made the winning bid of \$11,250.

The auction debut of the first American edition of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1912, set a strong precedent, exceeding its high estimate of \$7,500 to reach \$10,000.

Half of the highest prices in the sale went to first editions of cornerstones of American literature. Twentieth-century authors performed especially well, with William Faulkner's first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, leading the pack at \$21,250. The first edition of *Main Street*, 1920, by Sinclair Lewis, achieved a new auction record of \$6,500. Harper Lee's monumental *To Kill A Mockingbird*, 1960, sold for more than five times its high estimate of \$1,000, finally finishing at \$5,750. Similarly, a first edition with the dust jacket of *The Pastures of Heaven*, 1932, charmingly inscribed by author John Steinbeck to his friend Louis Paul, reached \$13,750.

Works by American modernist author Ernest Hemingway were well received, with 100% of the 14 offered lots going to buyers after frenzied bidding. An inscribed first trade edition of *A Farewell to Arms*, 1929, reached \$6,750, while a first edition of *Death in the Afternoon*, 1932, was purchased for \$2,125.

Another highlight was a rare limited first edition on handmade paper of James Joyce's magnum opus *Ulysses*, 1922, which exceeded its high estimate to sell for \$33,750.

Specialist John D. Larson said of the sale, "The robust sell-through rate of 87% demonstrated the strength of the market and continued interest in historic literature from the last two centuries, especially, as always, well preserved examples. Multiple institutional purchases underline the importance of the material we're handling, and the record achieved for the Cruikshank set typifies the appeal of exceedingly rare material."

The next sale of 19th & 20th Century Literature at Swann Galleries will be on November 14, 2017. For more information or consign quality materials, contact John D. Larson at jl Larson@swanngalleries.com.

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