

22 MAY 1920

IN LITTLE OLD NEW YORK

Mr. Lewis Tells Why He Wants to Be
Pulitzer Prizeless.—Gold Medal
To a Dying Architect.

Following the Pulitzer Prize awards there were meetings of the various committees of Those Dissatisfied with the Pulitzer Awards.

Among these was the committee of one consisting of Mr. Sinclair Lewis. He refused to accept the \$1,000 awarded to "Arrowsmith." He explained: "All prizes like all titles, are dangerous. The seekers for prizes tend to labor not for inherent excellence, but for alien rewards; they tend to write this, or timidly to avoid writing that, in order to tickle the prejudices of a haphazard committee. And the Pulitzer Prize for Novels is peculiarly objectionable because the terms of it have been constantly and grievously misrepresented."

"Those terms are that the prize shall be given for the American novel published during the year which shall best present the whole some atmosphere of American life and the highest standard of American life and the highest standard of American manners and manhood."

"This phrase, if it means anything whatever, would appear to mean that the appraisal of the novels shall be made, not according to their actual literary merit, but in obedience to whatever code of good form may chance to be popular at the moment."

It is pointed out that the Advisory Board of the School of Journalism of Columbia University (which under Joseph Pulitzer's will makes the prize recommendations, to be ratified by the university's trustees) has tacitly made awards on the basis of merit and not because of any moral lessons in books or plays considered. Pulitzer awards were made to Edith Wharten's novel "The Age of Innocence" and to Eugene O'Neill's play "Anna Christie."

But Mr. Lewis fears that the administrators of the Pulitzer prizes may become "a college of cardinals," so rooted and so sacred that to challenge them will be to commit blasphemy. So he says: "Only by regularly refusing the Pulitzer Prize can novelists keep such a power from being permanently set up over them."

"Between the Pulitzer Prizes, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and its training school, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, amateur boards of censorship, and the inquisition of earnest literary ladies, every compulsion is put upon writers to become safe, polite, obedient, and sterile. In protest, I declined election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters some years ago, and now I must decline the Pulitzer Prize."

Perhaps it would be unkind to attribute to Mr. Lewis a motive of pique because "Babbitt" and "Main Street" were ignored by the prize-givers. But there are literary critics who agree with the Advisory Board that his novel of medical ethics and aspirations is the best of all his novels. "F. P. A." imagines Mr. Lewis as singing:

I shot an "Arrowsmith" into the air;
It got a prize, but I don't care.

Mr. George Kelly might well also have occasion for pique because of the award to his play "Craig's Wife." He wrote "The Show-Off" and many class "The Show-Off" as one of the best comedies ever written in the United States. Yet "The Show-Off" went Pulitzer prizeless.

The sixth volume of the "History of the United States" by Edward Channing won the history prize. Harvey Cushing's "The Life of Sir William Osler" won the biography prize. Mr. Edward M. Kingsbury's "The House of a Hundred Sorrows" in the *New York Times* won the prize for the best editorial article of the year. Mr. B. R. Fitzpatrick's cartoon in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "The Law of Moses and the Laws of To-day," won the cartoon prize. Of the other prizes you were informed by cable.

The American Institute of Architects awarded its gold medal for architectural achievement to Howard Van Doren Shaw. He received it on his death bed in Baltimore. The Institute was still in session at Washington when it received news of the death of the man who designed the Flanders Field chapel and the Brest naval monument for the United States Government.

Four gold medals for distinguished social activity have been awarded by the National Institute of Social Sciences. For Mr. Clarence H. Mackay's service in the development of musical art as chairman of the Philharmonic Society the President of the Postal Telegraph Company was presented with one medal. The Rev. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman received like recognition as a leader of religious thought and action. He is the pastor of Brooklyn's Central Congregational Church. The award made to Mr. Stephen Tyng Mather was for his part in the development and administration of the National Parks. He is director of that service of the Department of the Interior. The fourth social service medal was bestowed on a woman. Mrs. Mary Schenck Woolman, of Boston, was thus recognised for her promotion and conduct of industrial and vocational training for girls.