

And Year to Get Over It

# Author Wrote Novel In Just Three Months

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NEW YORK, Nov. 10.—Three months to write a novel, and a year and more to get over it . . . that's part of the dramatic story of Alan Paton.

Paton's book is the now famous "Cry, the Beloved Country," heart-breaking tragedy about blacks and whites in South Africa, the author's home. A musical version, "Lost in the Stars," opened this week on Broadway. Paton is preparing a script for a movie, which he understands is scheduled for production next year.

Once a schoolmaster, and then for 13 years principal of the Diepkloof reformatory, he was on leave from his South African post to study reform methods abroad when, in Norway in September 1946, he started his novel. He finished it in this country in December, and handed the manuscript to Scribner's just before he left for home. In one respect he's a model author: Being thousands of miles away, he couldn't keep dropping in on his publisher and bothering him with questions.

## DEVOTED ALL HIS TIME.

While teaching, Paton had a little time to write short things; while in reform work, no time at all. As soon as his novel, published in January 1948, began to attract the attention of film-land, theater world and foreign publishers, he became so busy he had to devote all his time to it. He is here attending rehearsals and, now, performances, seeing the press and, when he can't get out of it, being seen by admirers and making speeches. Assured that he didn't need to worry about a talk scheduled here, since the presiding officer

would be helpful and sympathetic, he commented wryly:

"There are some speakers that no one can put at ease."

With thin, straight, graying hair, a square jaw, only a few wrinkles but deep ones in his sensitive face, he wears horn-rimmed glasses, and occasionally peers keen-eyed over the top of them, school-teacher-fashion.

For his first visit to this country, though he was on full pay as reformatory principal, he had to borrow money for his expenses, and his wife, due here soon from England on her first trip, had to go to work. He ate in snack bars, was wholly on his own, was unknown, and thought New York was wonderful.

## NOT THE SAME.

New York still is wonderful, but it's not the same. He can't have a simple lunch, it must be a luncheon party, and every dinner is a banquet. He'd like to steal away to a snack bar again. Everyone has been very kind, if not too kind: Scribner's, Maxwell Anderson, who wrote the words for the play; Kurt Weill, who did the music; Rouben Mamoulian, the director.

A novel has to have a unity of its own, he says; and a play, too, he understands, must have a dramatic unity. When the story of the pastor, Rev. Stephen Kumalo, and his wayward son went to the theater, it moved completely out of Paton's hands.

He has some poetry which he is considering offering to his publisher. Otherwise, he doesn't know what he'll do next. He may go back to reformatory work, or into politics, or write another book. Time will decide for him, he expects. But if he



—Associated Press Photo.

**ALAN PATON**

... Wins writing fame.

writes a new book, it will have to be done under the same compulsion, or not at all."