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220 W. 19th St., NEW YORK 11, N.Y.
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Cir. (D 77,465)

This Clipping From
NEW HAVEN, CONN.
REGISTER

FEB 8 - 1948

Africa's Woes

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY,
by Alan Paton (Charles Scribner's Sons; \$3)

The racial problem in America, theme of so many books these days, seems minor compared with the clash of races in South Africa, "the beloved country" where Mr. Paton lives and about which he writes so feelingly in this new novel.

Like America, South Africa not only has an exceedingly difficult racial problem, but also a housing shortage and dust bowl conditions in its myriad of valleys with almost unpronounceable names. From these blighted areas, the natives, simple, largely illiterate folk, stream in ever increasing hordes to Johannesburg to swell its already overcrowded slums and work in the mines or scrape together a living by devious, illegal means.

The central character of "Cry, The Beloved Country" is Stephen Kumalo, a simple, Zulu country parson, or umfundisi, whose son has gone to Johannesburg and lost all contact with his parents. Against the background of Kumalo's painful, harrowing search for his son through Johannesburg's rabbit-warren slums, Mr. Paton deftly describes the racial and economic problems he wishes to emphasize.

The search provides the novel with its suspense, and its climax when the devout, child-like umfundisi finally finds the boy—in prison awaiting trial for a capital offense of which he is all too guilty. Nearly all the characters are Zulus or other tribal natives, and Mr. Paton retains the native idiom as he puts their dialogue into English. This makes somewhat difficult reading at first, but one quickly grows accustomed to it.

Though his search for his son ends in tragedy and the plight of his people seems well-nigh hopeless, Kumalo is saved from loss of faith by the striking example of Christianity shown by the wealthy father of the white man whom his son has murdered. It is this good and kind owner of a large estate who saves the children of Kumalo's valley from famine and provides funds for a new church, an agricultural school and the hiring of an expert to teach the native farmers drought-fighting methods.

—G. A. M.



ALAN PATON, author of "Cry, the Beloved Country," his first published novel, was born in 1903 in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. He has traveled widely. . . His story was finished in the United States . . . but he writes about his native land and its people as he has known them. He taught in Ixopo, which is described in the novel. For 12 years he has been principal of the Diepkloof reformatory, in Johannesburg, and one of his principal characters is a delinquent boy and most of the novel is laid in Johannesburg. The question of race relations, which figures prominently in his book, has been discussed by him in numerous magazines.

— NEW HAVEN CONN. REGISTER —

Feb VIII 1948