

*A. Paton*

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### Truth

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### STORY OF AFRICAN LIFE

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY. Alan Paton. (Jonathan Cape.  
9s. 6d. net.)

The publishers describe this beautifully written novel as the story of a detribalised South African native forced by poverty to migrate to Johannesburg and there to drift into crime. It is not a very accurate description. Absolom Kumalo was forced by poverty to leave his district, it is true, but there was no lack of honest labour to be performed once he arrived in the big city, so that his descent into the abyss—he found his way to the scaffold—was because of other causes. What is more, the story is not so much about him as about the effect of his destiny upon his father, a Zulu parson who set out from the majestic valley of the Umzimkulu to look for him in the evil slums of cosmopolis. The contrast between the life of the tribes and that of the Johannesburg slums is so vividly depicted that when the old man returns to his own home one can almost smell the red earth which greets him.

The tone of the novel may be gathered from the fact that it is dedicated to Mr. Jan Hofmeyr. It is, in other words, the work of a sincere, manly and practical friend of the South African native. This does not mean that it is didactic. Part of the sadness of the story derives from what appears to be the author's apprehension that the South African racial problem in large measure defies a solution. In any case Mr. Paton is content to tell his story, which he does in noble, simple prose and with a rare insight into the African mind. Only a clod could read what he has written without being profoundly moved.