

U.S. Critics Acclaim New S.A. Novel

MR. ALAN PATON'S novel, "Cry, The Beloved Country," has been hailed by American reviewers as one of the greatest books ever to come out of South Africa.

The book — a novel of Zulu life in the Union — was published in New York on Monday, and early reviews have already reached the author, who is principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory near Johannesburg. The book was published by Scribners. English and South African publishing rights have been acquired by Messrs. Jonathan Cape.

The story concerns the efforts of a simple and dignified Zulu Minister of the Church of England, the Rev. Stephen Kumalo, to trace his brother, sister and only son, who have vanished in the urban chaos of Johannesburg's Native locations. There are vivid descriptions of the sordid confusion of city slums.

In the midst of these destructive social conditions, Mr. Kumalo hears "voices crying what must be done—a hundred, a thousand voices. But what do they help if one seeks for counsel, for one cries this and one cries that, and another cries something that is neither this nor that?"

Eventually, he finds his family, and their fate is a bitter commentary on the evils of detribalisation and urbanisation. His brother has become a loud-mouthed political agitator, his sister a beer-brewing harlot, and his only son a murderer.

A BEAUTIFUL NOVEL

The *New York Times'* critic says of Paton's book: "This is a beautiful novel, a rich, firm, moving piece of prose. Its matter and locale may be strange to most American readers, but its writing is so fresh, its projection of character so immediate and full, its events so compelling, and its understanding so compassionate that to read the book is to share intimately, even to a point of catharsis, in the grave human experience treated. For what in other hands might have made merely an interesting sociological documents, is here intensified into an urgent, poetic and profound spiritual drama, universal in its implications."

The *New York Herald Tribune* says that "not since *The Story of an African Farm* has a novel come out of South Africa which

touches as truly and poignantly the turmoil and burning of that glad, sad country."

Both reviewers devote special attention to Mr. Paton's literary style, which is an altogether successful attempt to use the "limpid rhythms" and cadences of Zulu and Xosa through the medium of the English language.

Cry, The Beloved Country was written while Mr. Paton was on a world tour of Penal Institute inspection. He had no intention of publishing the book, but began it "one rainy day in Trondjhem" to give him something to do in the evenings. He finished the book three months later in San Francisco, where friends insisted that it be published in the United States.

Forty-five-year-old Alan Paton was born in Natal, "where the tribal system was still relatively intact at the beginning of the century." An ex-schoolmaster, he came to Johannesburg in 1935 to become principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory. He was forcibly struck by the aftermath of Native urbanisation, and much of the material of the book is based on his experiences as head of the reformatory.

Commenting on the nature of the book, Mr. Paton told the *Sunday Express* that the breakdown of the tribal system was inevitable. "Our crime is that we have substituted nothing honourable in its place," he said.