



Ans. 7.0.54

403 East 3rd St.
Brooklyn 18, N.Y.
March 5, 1954

Mr. Alan Paton
Chas. Scribner's Sons
597 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Paton:

This letter has in it "no axe to grind". I just wanted to write it. Once I read "an impulse which is allowed to die can never be redeemed".

My interest in South Africa really started about twenty years ago when a very charming young woman, a graduate of the University of Pretoria, came on a visit to the city in Northern New York where I then lived. There I learned to know her. She was then Liberta Venter, an ardent Afrikaaner of rigid Boer stock.

Through all these years we have corresponded agreeing sometimes, disagreeing at other times. She is now Mrs. E. C. Van Hoepen. Her husband was the Curator of the Bloemfontein Museum.

Recently I have had to guard my pen in writing Liberta, fond as I am of her, because of my opposition to the Afrikaaner viewpoint, although I understand how fear breeds hate and hate breeds everything that is bad.

Because of my contact with just one South African, I have read everything I could find on that troubled land. Your books, I have considered, unequalled by any writer. Blanket Boy seems to me the next best.

Possibly I'm the only person in all this great city who has owned three copies of Too Late The Phalarope. One I bought, another a neighbor gave me, and the third Mrs. Van Hoepin sent me. Her forwarding the book seemed like a real gesture of affection and a desire to play fair on her part, as surely she must still differ with the fundamental theme of the book.

I'm going over the reviews of Too Late The Phalarope I have not found, so far, any references to two points which to me seem highly significant, and which, I believe, you certainly had in mind.

1. The narrator, an unloved, disfigured spinister, understood the poor boy and his family better than anyone else. Spinisters usually are not the real participants in life. Often they stand at the side and just observe. If intelligent, their observations are the keenest of all folks. How wise to choose such a one as the interpreter and the vehicle of expression.

2. To whom did the distraught boy go when he knew society would no longer accept him? To the Jew. The Jew who best knows, of all people in the world, what ostracism means, The Jew, who knows best, what it means not to belong.

Not long ago I wrote a friend, "What Dickens was to the underprivileged of England, What Victor Hugo was to France, What Tolstoy was to Russia, Alan Paton is to South Africa".

Thus I pay my tribute!

Often, I wonder to what countries do men go who violate the Immorality Act? Do they never return to their native land? Do their families usually go with them. Somewhere I read that you and Mrs. Paton were spending a year in a T. B. camp near Durban. Perhaps such an experience will produce another book. Wherever you and your family are I am wishing you all of the best things in life. I feel grateful for your writings.

I've tried to visualize a meeting of you and Albert Sweitzer.

I am asking Charles Scribner's Sons to read this letter, addressing the envelope, and forward to you. I feel sure they must have your address at all times.

Very truly yours,

(Miss) Ada R. Madden