Alan Paton

Cry, The Beloved Country

"A beautiful novel, rich, firm and moving . . . 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 the point of catharsis, in the grave human experience treated." —*The New York Times*

Cry, the Beloved Country

A Novel

Alan Paton

"Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much."

The most famous and important novel in South Africa's history, and an immediate worldwide bestseller when it was published in 1948, Alan Paton's impassioned novel about a black man's country under white man's law is a work of searing beauty. The eminent literary critic Lewis Gannett wrote, "We have had many novels from statesmen and reformers, almost all bad; many novels from poets, almost all thin. In Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* the statesman, the poet and the novelist meet in a unique harmony."

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice. Remarkable for its lyricism, unforgettable for character and incident, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a classic work of love and hope, courage and endurance, born of the dignity of man.

Note on the 1987 Edition

Cry, the Beloved Country, though it is a story about South Africa, was not written in that country at all. It was begun in Trondheim, Norway, in September 1946 and finished in San Francisco on Christmas Eve of that same year. It was first read by Aubrey and Marigold Burns of Fairfax, California, and they had it put into typescript and sent it to several American publishers, one of them being Charles Scribner's Sons. Scribners' senior editor, Maxwell Perkins, accepted it at once.

Perkins told me that one of the most important characters in the book was the land of South Africa itself. He was quite right. The title of the book confirms his judgment.

How did it get that title? After Aubrey and Marigold Burns had read it, they asked me what I would call it. We decided to have a little competition. We each took pen and paper and each of us wrote our proposed title. Each of us wrote "Cry, the Beloved Country."

Where did the title come from? It came from three or four passages in the book itself, each containing these words. I quote one of them:

> Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or a valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much.

This passage was written by one who indeed had loved the earth deeply, by one who had been moved when the birds of his land were singing. The passage suggests that one can love a country too deeply, and that one can be too moved by the song of a bird. It is, in fact, a passage of poetic license. It offers no suggestion as to how one can prevent these things from happening.

What kind of a book is it? Many other people have given their own answers to this question, and I shall give my own, in words written in another book of mine, *For You Departed*, published, also by Charles Scribner's Sons, in the year 1969 (published in London by Jonathan Cape with the title *Kontakion for You Departed*).

> So many things have been written about this book that I would not add to them if I did not believe that I know best what kind of book it is. It is a song of love for one's far distant country, it is informed with longing for that land where they shall not hurt or destroy in all that holy mountain, for that unattainable and ineffable land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the land that cannot be again, of hills and grass and bracken, the land where you were born. It is a story of the beauty and terror of human life, and it cannot be written again because it cannot be felt again. Just how good it is, I do not know and I do not care. All I know is that it changed our lives. It opened the doors of the world to us, and we went through.

And that is true. The success of *Cry, the Beloved Country* changed our lives. To put it in materialistic terms, it has kept us alive ever since. It has enabled me to write books that cost more to write than their sales could ever repay. So I write this with pleasure and gratitude.

Alan Paton
NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

Foreword

ONE OF THE standard items of conventional wisdom in book publishing is that no worthwhile book ever comes in unsolicited—out of nowhere or, as publishers are likely to put it, over the transom. There is, of course, a mountain of sad but practical experience behind this principle, but as with all such rules there are exceptions. One of the most dramatic of these was Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which was mailed to Maxwell Perkins by an acquaintance of Paton's in California.

At that time, Alan Paton was the superintendent of a reformatory for native youths in South Africa and was visiting prisons in different parts of the world to study their methods and experiences. Perkins was very much impressed by this book with its strange title, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but he did not live long after reading it, and few of us were aware of his enthusiasm although we knew that he had told Paton that one of the most important characters in the book was the land of South Africa itself.

When the book was published, it virtually exploded on the literary scene. Review after review heralded it as a literary classic, and sales began to climb at an extraordinary rate. Scribners noted that there was a "spontaneous chorus of praise" for the novel, and that was no exaggeration. The book became an instant bestseller and has sold thousands of copies every year in the forty years since its publication.

Cry, the Beloved Country is a classic work now and has found its place in school and college curriculums side by side with *Ethan Frome, The Great Gatsby*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*. It has also become a cultural force of great power and influence insofar as it has depicted the human tragedies of apartheid and brought readers all over the

world to an understanding of the perversity and evil of that tragically misguided political system. A book of such unique beauty and power is, of course, an extremely rare event, still rarer when one considers the chain of circumstances that brought an unknown writer to world fame. How fortunate we are that the idea that such publishing events never happen proved to be magnificently wrong.

CHARLES SCRIBNER, JR.

Book
I

1

THERE IS A lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa. About you there is grass and bracken and you may hear the forlorn crying of the titihoya, one of the birds of the veld. Below you is the valley of the Umzimkulu, on its journey from the Drakensberg to the sea; and beyond and behind the river, great hill after great hill; and beyond and behind them, the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand.

The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed.

Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. But the rich green hills break down. They fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned

it. Stand shod upon it, for it is coarse and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. The titihoya does not cry here any more.

The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh. The lightning flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead streams come to life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them any more.

2

THE SMALL CHILD ran importantly to the wood-and-iron church with the letter in her hand. Next to the church was a house and she knocked timidly on the door. The Reverend Stephen Kumalo looked up from the table where he was writing, and he called, Come in.

The small child opened the door, carefully like one who is afraid to open carelessly the door of so important a house, and stepped timidly in.

—I bring a letter, umfundisi.

—A letter, eh? Where did you get it, my child?

—From the store, umfundisi. The white man asked me to bring it to you.

—That was good of you. Go well, small one.

But she did not go at once. She rubbed one bare foot against the other, she rubbed one finger along the edge of the umfundisi's table.

—Perhaps you might be hungry, small one.

—Not very hungry, umfundisi.

—Perhaps a little hungry.

—Yes, a little hungry, umfundisi.

—Go to the mother then. Perhaps she has some food.

—I thank you, umfundisi.

She walked delicately, as though her feet might do harm in so great

a house, a house with tables and chairs, and a clock, and a plant in a pot, and many books, more even than the books at the school.

Kumalo looked at his letter. It was dirty, especially about the stamp. It had been in many hands, no doubt. It came from Johannesburg; now there in Johannesburg were many of his own people. His brother John, who was a carpenter, had gone there, and had a business of his own in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. His sister Gertrude, twenty-five years younger than he, and the child of his parents' age, had gone there with her small son to look for the husband who had never come back from the mines. His only child Absalom had gone there, to look for his aunt Gertrude, and he had never returned. And indeed many other relatives were there, though none so near as these. It was hard to say from whom this letter came, for it was so long since any of these had written, that one did not well remember their writing.

He turned the letter over, but there was nothing to show from whom it came. He was reluctant to open it, for once such a thing is opened, it cannot be shut again.

He called to his wife, has the child gone?

—She is eating, Stephen.

—Let her eat then. She brought a letter. Do you know anything about a letter?

—How should I know, Stephen?

—No, that I do not know. Look at it.

She took the letter and she felt it. But there was nothing in the touch of it to tell from whom it might be. She read out the address slowly and carefully—

Rev. Stephen Kumalo,
St. Mark's Church.
Ndotsheni.
NATAL.

She mustered up her courage, and said, it is not from our son.

—No, he said. And he sighed. It is not from our son.

—Perhaps it concerns him, she said.

—Yes, he said. That may be so.

—It is not from Gertrude, she said.

—Perhaps it is my brother John.

—It is not from John, she said.

They were silent, and she said, How we desire such a letter, and when it comes, we fear to open it.

—Who is afraid, he said. Open it.

She opened it, slowly and carefully, for she did not open so many letters. She spread it out open, and read it slowly and carefully, so that he did not hear all that she said. Read it aloud, he said.

She read it aloud, reading as a Zulu who reads English.

The Mission House,
Sophiatown,
Johannesburg.

25/9/46.

My Dear Brother in Christ,

I have had the experience of meeting a young woman here in Johannesburg. Her name is Gertrude Kumalo, and I understand she is the sister of the Rev. Stephen Kumalo, St. Mark's Church, Ndotsheni. This young woman is very sick, and therefore I ask you to come quickly to Johannesburg. Come to the Rev. Theophilus Msimangu, the Mission House, Sophiatown, and there I shall give you some advices. I shall also find accommodation for you, where the expenditure will not be very serious.

I am, dear brother in Christ,

Yours faithfully,
Theophilus Msimangu.

There were both silent till at long last she spoke.

—Well, my husband?

—Yes, what is it?

—This letter, Stephen. You have heard it now.

—Yes, I have heard it. It is not an easy letter.

—It is not an easy letter. What will you do?

—Has the child eaten?

She went to the kitchen and came back with the child.

—Have you eaten, my child?

—Yes, umfundisi.

—Then go well, my child. And thank you for bringing the letter. And will you take my thanks to the white man at the store?

—Yes, umfundisi.

—Then go well, my child.

—Stay well, umfundisi. Stay well, mother.

—Go well, my child.

So the child went delicately to the door, and shut it behind her gently, letting the handle turn slowly like one who fears to let it turn fast.

When the child was gone, she said to him, what will you do, Stephen?

—About what, my wife?

She said patiently to him, about this letter, Stephen?

He sighed. Bring me the St. Chad's money, he said.

She went out, and came back with a tin, of the kind in which they sell coffee or cocoa, and this she gave to him. He held it in his hand, studying it, as though there might be some answer in it, till at last she said, it must be done, Stephen.

—How can I use it? he said. This money was to send Absalom to St. Chad's.

—Absalom will never go now to St. Chad's.

—How can you say that? he said sharply. How can you say such a thing?

—He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back.

—You have said it, he said. It is said now. This money which was saved for that purpose will never be used for it. You have opened a door, and because you have opened it, we must go through. And *Tixo* alone knows where we shall go.

—It was not I who opened it, she said, hurt by his accusation. It has a long time been open, but you would not see.

—We had a son, he said harshly. Zulus have many children, but we had only one son. He went to Johannesburg, and as you said—when people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back. They do not even write any more. They do not go to St. Chad's to learn that knowledge without which no black man can live. They go to Johannesburg, and there they are lost, and no one hears of them at all. And this money....

But she had no words for it, so he said, it is here in my hand.

And again she did not speak, so he said again, it is here in my hand.

—You are hurting yourself, she said.

—Hurting myself? hurting myself? I do not hurt myself, it is they who are hurting me. My own son, my own sister, my own brother. They go away and they do not write any more. Perhaps it does not seem to them that we suffer. Perhaps they do not care for it.

His voice rose into loud and angry words. Go up and ask the white man, he said. Perhaps there are letters. Perhaps they have fallen under the counter, or been hidden amongst the food. Look there in the trees, perhaps they have been blown there by the wind.

She cried out at him, You are hurting me also.

He came to himself and said to her humbly, that I may not do.

He held out the tin to her. Open it, he said.

With trembling hands she took the tin and opened it. She emptied it out over the table, some old and dirty notes, and a flood of silver and copper.

—Count it, he said.

She counted it laboriously, turning over the notes and the coins to make sure what they were.

—Twelve pounds, five shillings and seven pence.

—I shall take, he said, I shall take eight pounds, and the shillings and pence.

—Take it all, Stephen. There may be doctors, hospitals, other troubles. Take it all. And take the Post Office Book—there is ten pounds in it—you must take that also.

—I have been saving that for your stove, he said.

—That cannot be helped, she said. And that other money, though we saved it for St. Chad's, I had meant it for your new black clothes, and a new black hat, and new white collars.

—That cannot be helped either. Let me see, I shall go....

—Tomorrow, she said. From Carisbrooke.

—I shall write to the Bishop now, and tell him I do not know how long I shall be gone.

He rose heavily to his feet, and went and stood before her. I am sorry I hurt you, he said. I shall go and pray in the church.

He went out of the door, and she watched him through the little window, walking slowly to the door of the church. Then she sat down at his table, and put her head on it, and was silent, with the patient suffering of black women, with the suffering of oxen, with the suffering of any that are mute.

All roads lead to Johannesburg. Through the long nights the trains pass to Johannesburg. The lights of the swaying coach fall on the cutting-sides, on the grass and the stones of a country that sleeps. Happy the eyes that can close.

3

THE SMALL TOY train climbs up on its narrow gauge from the Umzimkulu valley into the hills. It climbs up to Carisbrooke, and when it stops there, you may get out for a moment and look down on the great valley from which you have come. It is not likely the train will leave you, for there are few people here, and every one will know who you are. And even if it did leave you, it would not much matter; for unless you are a cripple, or very old, you could run after it and catch it for yourself.

If there is mist here, you will see nothing of the great valley. The mist will swirl about and below you, and the train and the people make a small world of their own. Some people do not like it, and find it cold and gloomy. But others like it, and find in it mystery and fascination, and prelude to adventure, and an intimation of the unknown. The train passes through a world of fancy, and you can look through the misty panes at green shadowy banks of grass and bracken. Here in their season grow the blue agapanthus, the wild watsonia, and the red-hot poker, and now and then it happens that one may glimpse an arum in a dell. And always behind them the dim wall of the wattles, like ghosts in the mist.

It is interesting to wait for the train at Carisbrooke, while it climbs up out of the great valley. Those who know can tell you with each whistle where it is, at what road, what farm, what river. But though

Stephen Kumalo has been there a full hour before he need, he does not listen to these things. This is a long way to go, and a lot of money to pay. And who knows how sick his sister may be, and what money that may cost? And if he has to bring her back, what will that cost too? And Johannesburg is a great city, with so many streets they say that a man can spend his days going up one and down another, and never the same one twice. One must catch buses too, but not as here, where the only bus that comes is the right bus. For there there is a multitude of buses, and only one bus in ten, one bus in twenty maybe, is the right bus. If you take the wrong bus, you may travel to quite some other place. And they say it is danger to cross the street, yet one must needs cross it. For there the wife of Mpanza of Ndotsheni, who had gone there when Mpanza was dying, saw her son Michael killed in the street. Twelve years and moved by excitement, he stepped out into danger, but she was hesitant and stayed at the curb. And under her eyes the great lorry crushed the life out of her son.

And the great fear too—the greatest fear since it was so seldom spoken. Where was their son? Why did he not write any more?

There is a last whistle and the train is near at last. The parson turns to his companion.

—Friend, I thank you for your help.

—Umfundisi, I was glad to help you. You could not have done it alone. This bag is heavy.

The train is nearer, it will soon be in.

—Umfundisi.

—My friend.

—Umfundisi, I have a favour to ask.

—Ask it then.

—You know Sibeko?

—Yes.

—Well, Sibeko's daughter worked here for the white man uSmith in Ixopo. And when the daughter of uSmith married, she went to Johannesburg, and Sibeko's daughter went with them to work. The address is here, with the new name of this married woman. But Sibeko has heard no word of his daughter this ten, twelve months. And he asks you to inquire.

Kumalo took the dirty, thumbed paper and looked at it. Springs, he said. I have heard of the place. But it is not Johannesburg, though they say it is near. Friend, the train is here. I shall do what I can.

He put the paper into his wallet, and together they watched the train. As all country trains in South Africa are, it was full of black travellers. On this train indeed there were not many others, for the Europeans of this district all have their cars, and hardly travel by train any more.

Kumalo climbed into the carriage for non-Europeans, already full of the humbler people of his race, some with strange assortments of European garments, some with blankets over their strange assortment, some with blankets over the semi-nudity of their primitive dress, though these were all women. Men travelled no longer in primitive dress.

The day was warm, and the smell strong in the carriage. But Kumalo was a humble man, and did not much care. They saw his clerical collar, and moved up to make room for the umfundisi. He looked around, hoping there might be someone with whom he could talk, but there was no one who appeared of that class. He turned to the window to say farewell to his friend.

—Why did Sibeko not come to me himself? he asked.

—He was afraid, umfundisi. He is not of our church.

—Is he not of our people? Can a man in trouble go only to those of his church?

—I shall tell him, umfundisi.

Kumalo's voice rose a little, as does the voice of a child, or indeed of a grown person, who wants others to hear.

—Tell him that when I am in Johannesburg I shall go to this place at Springs. He tapped the pocket where the paper was safe in his wallet. Tell him I shall make inquiries about the girl. But tell him I shall be busy. I have many things to do in Johannesburg.

He turned away from the window. It is always so, he said, as if to himself, but in truth to the people.

—I thank you for him, umfundisi.

The train whistled and jerked. Kumalo was thrown nearly off his feet. It would be safer, more dignified to take his seat.

—Stay well, my friend.

—Go well, umfundisi.

He went to his seat, and people looked at him with interest and respect, at the man who went so often to Johannesburg. The train gathered way, to creep along the ridges of the hills, to hang over steep

valleys, to pass the bracken and the flowers, to enter the darkness of the wattle plantations, past Stainton, down into Ixopo.

The journey had begun. And now the fear back again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fear of Gertrude's sickness. Deep down the fear for his son. Deep down the fear of a man who lives in a world not made for him, whose own world is slipping away, dying, being destroyed, beyond any recall.

Already the knees are weak of the man who a moment since had shown his little vanity, told his little lie, before these respectful people.

The humble man reached in his pocket for his sacred book, and began to read. It was this world alone that was certain.

4

FROM IXOPO THE toy train climbs up into other hills, the green rolling hills of Lufafa, Eastwolds, Donnybrook. From Donnybrook the broad-gauge runs to the great valley of the Umkomaas. Here the tribes live, and the soil is sick, almost beyond healing. Up out of the valley it climbs, past Hemu-hemu to Elandskop. Down the long valley of the Umsindusi, past Edendale and the black slums to Pietermaritzburg, the lovely city. Change here to the greatest train of all, the train for Johannesburg. Here is a white man's wonder, a train that has no engine, only an iron cage on its head, taking power from metal ropes stretched out above.

Climb up to Hilton and Lion's River, to Balgowan, Rosetta, Mooi River, through hills lovely beyond any singing of it. Thunder through the night, over battlefields of long ago. Climb over the Drakensberg, on to the level plains.

Wake in the swaying coach to the half-light before the dawn. The engine is steaming again, and there are no more ropes overhead. This is a new country, a strange country, rolling and rolling away as far as the eye can see. There are new names here, hard names for a Zulu who has been schooled in English. For they are in the language that was called Afrikaans, a language that he had never yet heard spoken.

—The mines, they cry, the mines. For many of them are going to work in the mines.

Are these the mines, those white flat hills in the distance? He can ask safely, for there is no one here who heard him yesterday.

—That is the rock out of the mines, umfundisi. The gold has been taken out of it.

—How does the rock come out?

—We go down and dig it out, umfundisi. And when it is hard to dig, we go away, and the white men blow it out with the fire-sticks. Then we come back and clear it away; we load it on to the trucks, and it goes up in a cage, up a long chimney so long that I cannot say it for you.

—How does it go up?

—It is wound up by a great wheel. Wait, and I shall show you one.

He is silent, and his heart beats a little faster, with excitement.

—There is the wheel, umfundisi. There is the wheel.

A great iron structure rearing into the air, and a great wheel above it, going so fast that the spokes play tricks with the sight. Great buildings, and steam blowing out of pipes, and men hurrying about. A great white hill, and an endless procession of trucks climbing upon it, high up in the air. On the ground, motorcars, lorries, buses, one great confusion.

—Is this Johannesburg? he asks.

But they laugh confidently. Old hands some of them are.

—That is nothing, they say. In Johannesburg there are buildings, so high—but they cannot describe them.

—My brother, says one, you know the hill that stands so, straight up, behind my father's kraal. So high as that.

The other man nods, but Kumalo does not know that hill.

And now the buildings are endless, the buildings, and the white hills, and the great wheels, and streets without number, and cars and lorries and buses.

—This surely is Johannesburg, he says.

But they laugh again. They are growing a little tired. This is nothing, they say.

Railway-lines, railway-lines, it is a wonder. To the left, to the right, so many that he cannot count. A train rushes past them, with a sudden roaring of sound that makes him jump in his seat. And on the other side of them, another races beside them, but drops slowly behind. Stations, stations, more than he has ever imagined. People are waiting there in hundreds, but the train rushes past, leaving them disappointed.

The buildings get higher, the streets more uncountable. How does one find one's way in such a confusion? It is dusk, and the lights are coming on in the streets.

One of the men points for him.

—Johannesburg, umfundisi.

He sees great high buildings, there are red and green lights on them, almost as tall as the buildings. They go on and off. Water comes out of a bottle, till the glass is full. Then the lights go out. And when they come on again, lo the bottle is full and upright, and the glass empty. And there goes the bottle over again. Black and white, it says, black and white, though it is red and green. It is too much to understand.

He is silent, his head aches, he is afraid. There is this railway station to come, this great place with all its tunnels under the ground. The train stops, under a great roof, and there are thousands of people. Steps go down into the earth, and here is the tunnel under the ground. Black people, white people, some going, some coming, so many that the tunnel is full. He goes carefully that he may not bump anybody, holding tightly on to his bag. He comes out into a great hall, and the stream goes up the steps, and here he is out in the street. The noise is immense. Cars and buses one behind the other, more than he has ever imagined. The stream goes over the street, but remembering Mpanza's son, he is afraid to follow. Lights change from green to red, and back again to green. He has heard that. When it is green, you may go. But when he starts across, a great bus swings across the path. There is some law of it that he does not understand, and he retreats again. He finds himself a place against the wall, he will look as though he is waiting for some purpose. His heart beats like that of a child, there is nothing to do or think to stop it. *Tixo*, watch over me, he says to himself. *Tixo*, watch over me.

A young man came to him and spoke to him in a language that he did not understand.

—I do not understand, he said.

—You are a Xosa, then, umfundisi?

—A Zulu, he said.

—Where do you want to go, umfundisi?

—To Sophiatown, young man.

—Come with me then and I shall show you.

He was grateful for this kindness, but half of him was afraid. He was glad the young man did not offer to carry his bag, but he spoke courteously, though in a strange Zulu.

The lights turned green, and his guide started across the street. Another car swung across the path, but the guide did not falter, and the car came to a stop. It made one feel confidence.

He could not follow the turnings that they made under the high buildings, but at last, his arm tired beyond endurance by the bag, they came to a place of many buses.

—You must stand in the line, umfundisi. Have you your money for the ticket?

Quickly, eagerly, as though he must show this young man that he appreciated his kindness, he put down his bag and took out his purse. He was nervous to ask how much it was, and took a pound from the purse.

—Shall I get your ticket for you, umfundisi? Then you need not lose your place in the line, while I go to the ticket office.

—Thank you, he said.

The young man took the pound and walked a short distance to the corner. As he turned it, Kumalo was afraid. The line moved forward and he with it, clutching his bag. And again forward, and again forward, and soon he must enter a bus, but still he had no ticket. As though he had suddenly thought of something he left the line, and walked to the corner, but there was no sign of the young man. He sought courage to speak to someone, and went to an elderly man, decently and cleanly dressed.

—Where is the ticket office, my friend?

—What ticket office, umfundisi?

—For the ticket for the bus.

—You get your ticket on the bus. There is no ticket office.

The man looked a decent man, and the parson spoke to him humbly. I gave a pound to a young man, he said, and he told me he would get my ticket at the ticket office.

—You have been cheated, umfundisi. Can you see the young man? No, you will not see him again. Look, come with me. Where are you going, Sophiatown?

—Yes, Sophiatown. To the Mission House.

—Oh yes. I too am an Anglican. I was waiting for someone, but I

shall wait no longer. I shall come with you myself. Do you know the Reverend Msimangu?

—Indeed, I have a letter from him.

They again took the last place in the line, and in due time they took their places in the bus. And it in its turn swung out into the confusion of the streets. The driver smoked carelessly, and it was impossible not to admire such courage. Street after street, light after light, as though they would never end, at times at such speed that the bus swayed from side to side, and the engine roared in the ears.

They alighted at a small street, and there were still thousands of people about. They walked a great distance, through streets crowded with people. His new friend helped to carry his bag, but he felt confidence in him. At last they stopped before a lighted house, and knocked.

The door opened and a young tall man in clerical dress opened to them.

—Mr. Msimangu, I bring a friend to you, the Reverend Kumalo from Ndotsheni.

—Come in, come in, my friends. Mr. Kumalo, I am glad to greet you. Is this your first visit to Johannesburg?

Kumalo could not boast any more. He had been safely guided and warmly welcomed. He spoke humbly. I am much confused, he said. I owe much to our friend.

—You fell into good hands. This is Mr. Mafolo, one of our big business men, and a good son of the Church.

—But not before he had been robbed, said the business man.

So the story had to be told, and there was much sympathy and much advice.

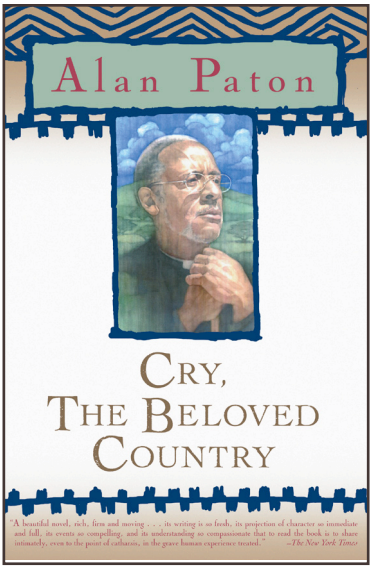
—And you are no doubt hungry, Mr. Kumalo. Mr. Mafolo, will you stay for some food?

But Mr. Mafolo would not wait. The door shut after him, and Kumalo settled himself in a big chair, and accepted a cigarette though it was not his custom to smoke. The room was light, and the great bewildering town shut out. He puffed like a child at his smoke, and was thankful. The long journey to Johannesburg was over, and he had taken a liking to this young confident man. In good time no doubt they would come to discuss the reason for this pilgrimage safely at an end. For the moment it was enough to feel welcome and secure.

Cry, the Beloved Country

A Novel

Alan Paton



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