

have a chair and books in my room. But I stay in because the other prisoners are kept in.

Now, they cannot say that I am dangerously insane, nor can they claim that I deserved punishment by my conduct. So they say that in a letter to my sister, I told her that "I wish to go out soon, and get rich quick, and return to Italy." I answered that it is not true, and, not knowing if they were saying it for a second end or very uncertain of its truth, I had believed to have convinced them. But two weeks ago Mr. Thompson was here, and they told him the same thing, and said that they cannot give me more liberty because I am a dangerous man. After that, I was declared by the Prison authorities "A model prisoner;" the best one, and after my conduct here, really exemplar.

They believe me guilty; they believe my principles to be aberration and insanity; they believe my friends (I mean the comrades and Italians) arch-criminals; they believe, (and told me so) that the Americans in our behalf are fools and cheaters. But, what is worse, they asked me if I believed in God, in the golden rule; if the murderers shall not be punished. If they do not nail me, I will answer.

P.S. Yet they are not naturally bad, and they let my door open, give me two cups of milk a day, and the permission to keep books in my room. These are privileges which few are given here. I feel ashamed and my heart aches for them, yet I shall help myself, even when I cannot help others, and appreciate what I receive.

April 17, 1925.

*Bridgewater Hospital for Criminal Insane*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

Your letter has reached me today. I am improving and I don't think I have stomach ulcers. Now, I have milk at each meal and it does me good.

Yes, I can read Spanish, and it would be great to me, the poor Mugoni's letters. Please, in writing to those comrades, tell them that I salute them brotherly, and with them also the Mexican peasants, workers, good men and women, whom I love so dearly, give them my greetings.

Your letter is alright, sweet as nectar to me.

I fear a little for those of F——, because, as the letters of any prisoner to his friends, are not written for publication, that is without care, and are heart-crying soul's notes, burst out spontaneously and without pre-co-ordination, they may appear incomplete and orderless. Yet, they are humane documents.

April 26, 1925.

*Charlestown Prison for Criminal Insane*

DEAR FRIEND BRITE:<sup>1</sup>

I do hope that you have had news of me during the last few months. If so, I feel sure that you have understood the causes which have unabled me to answer to your Christmas letter and gift, and, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Mary Brite of Cincinnati, Ohio.

that you have never blamed me for my involuntary silence. . . .

I am very grateful to you for your solidarity to both Nick and me. I understand what the sum that you have sent me may mean to you, and I appreciate it beyond the meaning of words. Thanks to you and all my friends whom I received money from this last Christmas, I have this day an account of \$102.23, which shows how many small ones together will make a big one. This money will suffice, I hope, 'til the day in which the case will be however set, and an end came. . . .

May 11, 1925.

*Charlestown Prison for Criminal Insane*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

I have read in the papers the strong plea that our Eugene V. Debs has made in our behalf, and yet your letter has filled my eyes with tears. Oh, indeed I would have been with you, near, honoring the grand old young man. I love him as I love my father and my masters. . . .

How happy he must have been of the welcome that you all have given him. One of my friends who has not known him before, spoke to me of him, almost weeping. I shall be happy forever to have seen and known him, and have his friendship; such a superior man. But I wonder of his and your optimism. Also our dear and noble Mrs. Evans wrote me a letter filled,

vibrating of optimism. I cannot understand from where and from what are drawn the reasons for your optimism.

It may be the effect of my captivity—but to me the world seems all black and tragic. Of this I will speak in another letter, after having received your promised, and very much wished, further account of the Teacher's words.

I have a letter for him, in which I said that "they are trying to break me morally and physically, so that if they shall not be able to kill me, or keep me in chains 'til my death, they will make a living wreck out of me." I also told him that at the worst, I will make my own little revolution before the close of the book, that is, going, but flinging the doors.

I came near tearing the letter to pieces, when I thought of the sorrow that my words will cause to the Teacher's heart. But, I had thought and felt so, and I shall tell the truth to you and to him. Death for death, I think that the times require to bring with us some enemies, some black-guards—I should say the more that is possible. It is my reason, not my heart, that is speaking so. I think I do not feel so now, but sometimes. I still abhor the blood now, as always before.

Yes, my heartburn is gone, and I am quite well, so well that I feel to write a treatise on sociology, which I have not yet begun, because I wish to hear some friends in its regard.

June 10, 1925. *Charlestown Prison*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

I have just read your welcome letter and the enclosed one of Comrade R——. Thank you for both of them. I will return you the latter, and write to its author. . . .

Now, dear Comrade Blackwell, I spoke with you pessimistically of others' optimism, because of Comrade Debs' optimism and Mrs. Evans' great optimistic letters from England. This I have intended, since we, you and I, had not discussed yet on that subject.

It may be the prison, the paint's gas, and my conviction that I am comically doomed, that makes me rough and difficult—but I cannot help a reaction when a note of optimism vibrates into my dark prospect of this mad world. This in spite that I wish and like that people be optimistic and have faith. It is that I belong to the voluntaristic, to which "faith" only means strong life and steady will. History shows an gradual advance, you say. This opinion of yours is shared by the greatest part of the comrades, and by many scholars and thinkers. I doubt it. . . .

One beautiful morning, a young bandit, a lifer, with a young wife and two children, looked through the window of our shop, and said to me, "What a wonderful good world this will be 5,000 years from now, if it will yet exist." "Yes, then it may be, 5000 times better, or as well, 5000 times worse than it is now. It depends on the people's will, actions and capacities."

Thus I answered and explained to him—because I had seen at once that he believed that the world must get better by force—I mean by its fate.

But enough of this poor theorizing. I have faith and I am optimistic—we ought to be so, and I have intended, previously, an impersonal discussion or judgment in these sentiments. Yet, of course, nothing is worse than these sentiments based on fallacies—it becomes horrors, illusion, and paralysis. This is the reason why we anarchist are often vexed with the reformist, even if, as Malatesta, we recognize to be ourselves reformist at the same time that we are revolutionists. . . .

June 18, 1925. *Charlestown Prison*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

Well, well—I had thought it impossible; an antecedent publication of such a directly and really radical book as is *The Peace and the War*, by Proudhon, in this free country. Now that your letter proved to the contrary, I am only glad to apologize for my "temerity" and mistaken "judgment." Well, I will translate it, and a learned American Comrade will re-touch the translation and publish it. I have learned that only the first of the several letters which I wrote to my family from Bridgewater, has reached them. Also a letter concerning the translation was kept by my keepers, without a word of warning. Maybe my keepers have decided to make the translation as well. . . .

Kropotkin has been able to write inspirational remembrance because he escaped from his keepers.

I cannot see how our stupid contingency shall inspire and fortify future revolutionists and prisoners. It is indeed so stupid, that it cannot be told at all. I have been found guilty two times, of two crimes of which I am innocent in the complete sense of the word. . . .

But, if I make them pay dear for my life, if instead to rot or to be killed beastlike, I will choose to die beautifully in an open and heroic rebellion, that would signify something, inspire and create. The enemy would ponder a little before to frame others upon the already framed.

It would be the old and yet the best way to teach—to teach with the example greater than all orations. If generalized, it would free the world of all the tyrants and their black guards.

When the hopes of freedom are gone forever, better the death than the chains, better for both the chained and his beloved—for, to mourn a living one is the most excruciable of the sorrows. This I say, serenely.

So please do not worry—all the hopes are not yet gone—by them I realize the possibilities. And I am quite well, capable of a long resistance and of a longer feat. And I laugh. . . .

The shame about China may develop in a world wide shame and crime. There is no choice, either to destroy or be destroyed.

June 20, 1925. Charlestown Prison

GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES TO MY DEAR COMRADE: <sup>1</sup>

Just this evening I have received your two postcards greeting and good wishes on my birthday. You say you would like send me roses and peonies from your garden. I would appreciate them immensely—for I love flowers, living fragments of heaven, rising from the earth. You seem to ignore that you have sent me something even more sublime than flowers and stars, your loving, noble spirit, the woman spirit. It revives the flames of my withered life. I am in the twilight, the sky is dark, there are lightnings and thunder. But I like the storm, I am fearless and serene.

To have your friendship quickens the life in me and sweetens my soul. The spirit of your words reaches and thrills the innermost sources of my life.

What am I doing? Well, reading, writing some articles, corresponding, translating *The Peace and War* by Proudhon, hoping and thinking.

The hot waves of which you spoke have reached us here, three days of very hot weather—about a hundred degrees, but it does not bother me at all. The trouble with the weather in this state is that the season is short and the weather variable. Many poor Italian immigrants troubled by the new place's very different way of life used to joke: "Crazy weather and crazy peoples in America." It seems to me the whole world is crazy. In my native place in northern Italy the

<sup>1</sup> Irene Benton of Granada, Minn.

weather warmed up in April and keep increasing steadily and slowly. It acts the same way in the fall. Winter has more snow and less freezing than here. The results are that we raise corn, wheat, beans and cut hay three time a year. We cut hay the first time in May and when the season is rainy we cut 4 crops, after which the mountaineers come down in the autumn and put their herds to pasture in the meadows and return again in the spring.

Forgive me if I cannot write oftener as you deserve.

*June 21, 1925. Charlestown Prison*

MY DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

. . . . Now, everytime I think of you, I remember your wish to hear of my mother, indeed I sense it—and my promises to speak to you of her. And each time I feel a little ashamed and regretful for my conduct, but also gladdened by all of this. But, my good Comrade, how can I speak to you of my mother, while in this present physical and moral condition, when homicide impulses are hammering into my very heart and skull? I hold my mother's memory as the sacrest thing to me. I feel an unspeakable responsibility at the very thought to speak of her to you, and my conditions do not allow me of it. It would be a torture to me now, for I would really like to speak of my mother with the tongue of an arch-angel.

I will do my best to improve myself and I promise you that when the good hour will strike, you will be told by me of my most good and adorable mother. . . .

P.S. I may have been crude and cruel as ferocious in my posteriour letters, but, do not let it bother you. Mankind needs the acquisition of the faculties and forces to discern the truth and look into it.

*June 28, 1925. Charlestown Prison*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

Your letter of June 23rd was welcomed as all your letters are. . . .

It happened that I remembered the words of our Debs which follow the others: "good things are ahead, if we will be faithful to our highest duty." These latter words alter the affirmation of his optimism. He bases it, not on events, but upon our deeds. And thus I would sign it with both of my hands.

I am quite well now; I labored all the day long, describing one of a series of articles about Russia and the Bolsheviks. As soon as I will have it finished, I will begin the translation of the book.

This year, the season is quite late, and the weather irregular. Yet, I hope you will enjoy the country and the sea, and wisely, treasuring their treasure.

*July 8, 1925. Charlestown Prison*

DEAR COMRADE DONOVAN:

I write with little hope to reach you on this shore,<sup>1</sup> before your sailing, but it may be possible if our com-

<sup>1</sup> Mary Donovan went to Ireland in the summer of 1925.

rades will come here with Mr. Thompson. So, I do not know exactly your inner opinion about the outcome of our case, though I believe you to be more optimistic as to how the real chances should allow. It is natural and also good of you, such opinion.

Yet, I pray you to tell our friends that all the probabilities are that a new trial will be denied, this is my firm conviction. It is better to be pre-warned than to be taken by surprise and found unprepared.

And now, with hope to reach you yet on this side of the big pond, I would like to make hundreds of accommodations about your trip, to wish you an good voyage, to bid you a hearty farewell and a vigorous handshake. . . .

*July 21, 1925. Charlestown Prison*

DEAR COMRADE BLACKWELL:

I have just finished reading your letter dated July 18th, which arrived a few minutes ago. . . .

The Defense Committee is about to publish a financial account, and I have been asked to write a letter, also in Nick's name, to be printed in the first page of the account. In 1923 a similar account was published by the Committee, with a letter written by me and signed by both of us, which was much praised by our comrades, and by the readers. The comrades know my actual psychologic state. There is venom in my heart, and fire in my brain, because I see the real things so clearly to utterly realize what a tragic laughing

stock our case and fate are. So my comrades exercised a gentle pressure to induce me to simply translate in English the old letter to be printed, in the new financial account about to be published in English.

Miss Mary Donovan has been here last Thursday. She will soon sail for Ireland for a six weeks trip, and she said that some friend will come here soon to take my translation, which is now due. But it would be necessary the presence of Mr. Thompson. For this I think that my friends have pre-arranged with him a near future visit, and I hope to see them soon.

But, returning to the letter, it was written three years ago, when the condition of the case and of ourselves were not so bad as they are now, and for this reason, it is no longer truthful, as it was then.

I have thought and thought, tried and re-tried to add to it a statement of facts and a confession, but having never satisfactorily succeeded, this morning I resolved to do nothing more, just use the translation of the letter. Now, your letter had inclined me to add something. Well we will see.

Here is another bad story. Only three weeks ago, I have received my books from Bridgewater, in frail and bad condition. All that I had left in my room there, was not received. Hence, a letter from me, with a list of the objects left there, to the Medical Director. This evening the following answer came: "Dear Sir: I have had Mr. Tallman make a very careful search for any property of yours which may have been left at this institution, and so far have been