

the brickyards of Springfield, Massachusetts, intervened before he again returned to New York and secured temporary work as a pastry cook. Five months of unemployment sent him back to Springfield where he joined a railroad construction gang. He went from there to Worcester and finally, in 1915, to Plymouth, where he remained until his arrest, except for an interval during 1917-1918 when he went to Mexico to avoid the draft. He was variously ditch-digger, pick-and-shovel man with a road gang, laborer in the plant of the Plymouth Cordage Company of Plymouth, ice-cutter and fish-peddler. Active interest in a strike of the Plymouth Cordage workers in 1916 marked him in the region as a labor agitator.

Wherever he went, Vanzetti continued his studies with increasing fervor. His two most thumbed books were copies of *The Divine Comedy* and Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*.

Vanzetti was thirty-one years old when he and Sacco were arrested. No criminal charge had ever before been made against either of the men. A summary narrative of the circumstances of their arrest, their conviction for murder on July 14, 1921, and the events which after more than seven years ended in their execution, will be found in an appendix.

During the period covered by the letters of this chapter (1921-1924), Vanzetti was taken from Charlestown prison to Dedham jail three times. Each time arguments were heard before the court on motions for a new trial.

Meanwhile, among guards and wardens at the

State prison, he had gained the reputation of a hard worker and a constant reader and writer. Immediately after entering the prison in August, 1920, he was assigned to the paint shop where the state automobile license plates are painted. Early in 1923 he was compelled to seek a change of work because the paint gases affected his digestion. He was then placed in the prison tailor shop where he worked until near the close of 1924.

January 10, 1921.<sup>1</sup> *Charlestown Prison*

DEAR ALFONSINA:<sup>2</sup>

I had received your letter dated Jan. 6-21. I heartily laughed to hear that the finger-nails of the little cat have scratched the Zora's<sup>3</sup> nose, and I continue to laugh everytime I think about it. Surely it is a good lesson not only for Zora and other child, but for mankind. The little cat knows very well that it has a sharpened nails, and that when a little girl molests it, it is enough to scratch a little her nose for be let free. People too has sharp finger-nails, and the noses [of] tyrants and oppressors is make of flesh too, but it look tho the people ignored this notion. Oh how much less sorrowness and misery would be among the mor-

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written before the Dedham trial of Sacco and Vanzetti on the charge of murder.

<sup>2</sup> Vanzetti was living in the home of Mrs. Alfonsina Brini in North Plymouth at the time of his arrest.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Brini's small daughter.