

Vienna, Austria

December 27, 1831

PART OF A PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in Vienna, Austria, to his aunt, Josephine Declouet de l'Homme in Attakapas, La.

...suppose that it is a miniature. A large portrait would be too difficult to carry. As Italian painters had a greater reputation than French painters, I shall have my portrait done in Rome or Naples. I also intend to offer my portrait to my uncle Brognier ¹ or to one of his daughters, but it is not without hoping for a return, as, in exchange I hope he will give me his portrait. In any case, if he was not willing to do so, I would have his portrait made at my own expenses. So, you can see that I have the hope of seeing him. It is impossible for him to wish to spend his old age far from his family in this cursed Cuba island. Upon this bloody ground where law does not protect life. Upon my return to France, I hope to find him in Bordeaux.

I shall write to Fideline ² today and I shall not forget the message you asked me to forward to your godchild. For two months, I have not heard from Bordeaux. In the last letter Fideline wrote to me, she told me that Mrs. Sommereau ³ heard from Catiche ⁴. I shall write to my uncle Neuville ⁵ as soon as I can. In the meantime, tell him that I love him and that I hope he will not forget me. I am angry at my good ⁶ La Clair for his neglect. But I do not believe he has any cause to complain about me. I wrote to him very often. You, St. Clair, Catiche and Mr. ⁷ Nee, together you should be able to write to me at least every other month. By myself, I do more than this. I do not know at the present time whether Mr. Nee is in town or at the Attakapas. How can I write to him? Remember me to my uncle Benoit.

You told me about a marriage which surprised me a little and even shocked me but at the same time gave me a great deal of pleasure. I shall be eternally grateful to you for

¹Declouet

²Declouet Barde, Brognier's daughter

³Caroline Declouet, her sister

⁴Declouet Lastrapes, my aunt

⁵Declouet

⁶Francois

⁷Pierre Louis

having helped me to clear up the character of ⁸. Truly, even in Paris she would shine. Seeing such a modest deportment, hearing her sweet and so candid voice, the cleverest Parisian, the most experienced one in unveiling women's trickery would be taken in. But that is enough. This part of my letter is only for you. I am very thankful to Desessarts for the letter he wrote to me. He may expect an answer. This letter is already too big to let me enclose another one with it. Upon the first opportunity, I shall take care of him. I think too highly of his friendship to neglect him. I felt so sad about poor Mr. Trouard's death. Embrace None for me. He got angry because I had stopped addressing him in a familiar way. Now, I shall do as he wants. You must not entertain any fear about the events which took place and might happen again. First, I have no intention to mix up into what does not concern me, moreover, should I do so, I do not believe I would be taking any risk. Since the July revolution, there has not been any capital punishment for a political offence. You say that France is unhappy. Open your eyes, it is happier, more prosperous, stronger than ever. Nothing better could have happened to it. But it is time for me to stop all that chattering, you must be tired of it. So, goodbye, I kiss you very fondly and repeat that I am your best friend and nephew.

Alexandre Declouet

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⁸words scratched off

⁹P.S. Tomorrow, I am going to the theater with the hope to see young Duke of Reichstadt, the great Napoleon's son. It is said that he is a handsome young man, tall and well-built. From what I saw he is generally well liked here and his grandfather, the Emperor of Austria, is crazy about him. P.S. Since I have been travelling my expenses amount to 100 dollars a month. In Paris, I spent almost as much but I had professors and I bought many books. Now, I have over 120 volumes. I am telling you this because I think it might interest you. Remember me to good Victoire and prepare my savage to receive a new master. I am afraid I am going to be too kind for him and will spoil him.

¹⁰Original letter on file at the Louisiana Room, University of Louisiana at Lafayette