

Palermo, Italy
March 14, 1832

*PERSONAL LETTER from Alexandre Declouet in Palermo,
Italy
to his aunt, Josephine Declouet de Homme in Attakapas,
Louisiana in St. Martin Parish.*¹

My dear aunt,

I am writing to you hastily therefore you will forgive me if my letter is not very long. I was not hoping to have the pleasure to write to you from here but a good opportunity was offered and I thought it would be bad for me not to take advantage of it, specially after having remained so long without letting you hear from me. The last time I wrote to you I was in Vienna, it was a long time ago, so long that I almost blush when I mention it. However, I am not the one who should blush. The almost uninterrupted silence of all my friends justify me and exempts me from looking further for more excuses. Instead of offering some, I am the one who must request some. I am entitled to make reproaches, but I have already done so and up to the present time it was useless and I believe I would do better not to make use of them again. From now on, I shall answer silence by silence and neglect by reciprocal neglect. But why should it be so? When you have love for each other, why not express it? Why allow time and absence to loosen imperceptibly cherished ties and blunt feelings one should enjoy nurturing and making stronger every day? Why when it is so easy and pleasant to do otherwise? It is very sweet to be among one's friends, to be able, at every moment to communicate to them your thoughts and your feelings. Absence also has charms. It is pleasant to think that although you are alone in foreign countries you have friends who think of you. However, how more pleasant and sweeter if such friends would express themselves more often. When you are far from your friends how you wish

¹Original letter on file at the Louisiana Room, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

to hear from them and how strongly satisfied you are when it happens!! What does it take to create such an interest and offer such a strong pleasure? The answer, my dear aunt, is very easy: a little exactitude from both parts. For my part, I believe I shall have the greatest pleasure to be exact, but I need some encouragement, I prefer to answer, then. I have plenty to say. So, it is up to you to often hear from me. Write often and I assure you that you will never have to complain about me.

The last time you heard from me was from Venice in a letter to St. Clair (my uncle). Since that time, I did a good deal of travelling. I went through almost all of Italy, going from Venice to Bologna, passing through Padoua, Vicence, Verone, Mantou, Parma and Modene. I am not giving you any detail as attempting to describe all the remarkable sights would be endless. After spending 4 days in Bologna I went to Florence for 12 days. From Florence, I went to Rome in 6 days. In Rome, I had a very pleasant stay which lasted a month and a few days, not half of the time needed for this interesting city. In 4 days, I went from Rome to Naples, the greatest city of Italy and the third, I believe, in Europe. The climate of Naples is delightful and its surroundings are charming. During my sojourn in Naples (which lasted 5 weeks) I had the unusual chance to see a Vesuvius eruption. But I shall speak to you about this another time. My letter will leave aboard an American vessel leaving for New York in half an hour. If I was not in such a hurry, be sure that it would not be so short nor so poorly written.

I left Naples on the 12 of this month in a steamboat and I arrived here yesterday. I shall leave Palermo in two days. I intend to tour Sicily, passing through Aliamo, Trapani, Circa, Girgente, Syracuse, Latania and Messina from where I shall sail for Naples. The tour will take about a month, I hope to be in Rome for Holy Week. I shall sojourn in Rome and Florence in order to learn Italian well and then I shall return to France through Livourne, Genoa, Nice and Marseilles. From Marseilles, I shall pay a little visit to Bordeaux seeing the Pyrenees on the way. I hope to be in Bordeaux next September. Before that time, you will hear from me again. My financial condition is pretty good. Since the beginning of this trip I have hardly spent more than \$80 a month. It seems to me that it is not too much and that my little fortune must not suffer from that, otherwise, I would like to know about it and then I would go home immediately. You must realize that I enjoy Europe and if (from this month on) nothing comes to prevent it I would like to spend here 20 months more. It is probably the last chance I would have to satisfy my curiosity. Therefore, forgive me if I am not in a hurry to give up such beautiful things!! But I must tell you goodbye. Upon the first chance I have I shall write to you again and will give you more details. My friendly regards to all the family.

I kiss you with all my
heart, A. Declouet