

Bordeaux, France  
August 1, 1832

*PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in Bordeaux, France, to his grandfather, Agricole Fuselier in Attakapas, Louisiana.* <sup>1</sup>

How unhappy one is, my dear grandpapa, to be far from one's family when knowing this it is overwhelmed by misfortunes and plunged into death and sorrow. Since your letter of May 16, I have been distressed. I wish I could leave immediately to be near my family, mingle my tears with its tears, share its unhappiness and sorrow trying to soften them. My sadness and anxiety torment me. I feel I am chained in a prison without being able to make efforts to escape. However, I hope that within a month I shall be on my way and that winds will push me toward the land where I was born, toward my family, my friends, toward all that is dearest to me in the world. Your letter, my dear grandfather, and above all, my poor uncle's death make me take a decision. <sup>2</sup> I would feel guilty if I remained in Europe having a good time while my parents are uneasy on my account. <sup>3</sup> My place now is near them. Duty and inclination call me there. Furthermore, dear grandpapa, the wish alone you express would be sufficient for my decision. This is what I told you in my letter from Rome and I was only waiting for your answer to decide whether to leave or stay. Now that you heard the explanation that I think I should have given you before taking such a determination and since you persist in calling me to you, I don't hesitate a moment and I must, without doubt, board a ship for New Orleans before this letter reaches you. Do not believe, I beg of you, that I misunderstood the remarks you made to me in a preceding letter. I dare believe that my answer did not give you an occasion to form such

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<sup>1</sup>Original letter on file at the Louisiana Room, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

<sup>2</sup>Note: This uncle must be on Alexander's mother, Fuselier, side.

<sup>3</sup>Note: His real parents died when he was an infant so he was raised by his aunt Josephine Declouet de l'Homme and his uncle Christopher de l'Homme.

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an opinion. I think I offered to you my reasons with the frankness and the confidence you inspire me without going beyond the deepest respects' limits. Be sure, dear grandpapa, that your advices, warnings even reprimands will only increase my affection for you because I am convinced that, in all cases, they were and always will be inspired by the interest and affection you have for me.

For almost three weeks, I have been in Bordeaux. I received your letter a few days after my arrival. I did not answer you right away as I preferred to wait for the ship La Trinite which goes directly to New Orleans, rather than to send my letter through New York. It is a very fine ship and I would have liked to take advantage of it for myself if I did not fear to arrive to New Orleans during the bad season. Besides, I need to go to Paris where most of my belongings are. I shall try to leave with Mrs. Lanoux and Mrs. Mufson who were to board the Bolivar but I am not sure of this. In any case, I shall write to you again to inform you about the ship I am choosing and the time and day of my departure. I shall leave for Paris shortly. I am only waiting for my uncle Brognier's son (Alexandre) I am anxious to meet and who is due from Havana within a few days. He has been awarded the rank of Captain of the Lancers in Havana and he is going to join his brother. When I arrived in Bordeaux, I heard very sad news about my poor uncle Brognier. He almost perished from a murderer's attack. He was in Havana sitting near the window of his room when he was hit by a pistol loaded with bullets and buck-shot. His arm was smashed but the bullet was removed skillfully. For a long time, his life was in danger but through the latest news we had the relief to hear he would recover. His family does not know yet this misfortune. The criminals have not been found out yet but one supposes a mulatto was involved hired for this crime by two officers, my uncle's enemies.

I think, my dear grandpapa that you have already heard about this poor Lanoix's death. On April 14, he died from a stroke which killed him within 40 minutes. I heard this sad piece of news in Rome where I was waiting for some letters of credit to be sent by him. I was almost without any money and I was sending him letter upon letter to beg him not to keep me waiting for too long. I was kept in Rome for two weeks without any answer. Mr. G.M. Plicque, Mr. Lanoix's son-in-law finally decided to answer me sending me at the same time a sum of 1600 francs and informing me that was all Mr. Lanoix had for me. I was quite astonished to learn this while I believed I still had with Mr. Lanoix the 1400 francs I had left intact. I wrote to Mr. Plicque to ask him for some explanation but he did not deign to answer me. I do not know how to interpret this and how to reimburse Mr. Lanoix for an advance payment. Is it possible that Mr. Lanoix's heirs took hold of 1400 francs to reimburse themselves for what Mr. Lanoix had advanced to me. If such is the case, as I believe, I do not see why Mr. Plicque did not want to answer my questions. Furthermore, I do not think that it was in order to reimburse Mr. Lanoix that you had sent him 1400 francs but to provide for my expenses. This is the way Mr. Lanoix understood it and he mentioned it to me in several of his letters. Anyway, instead of 1400 francs I had to be satisfied with 1000 francs which have covered my running expense since June 8 and that a month travel (from Rome to Bordeaux, passing by Florence, Genoa and Marseilles)

and my taylor have already reduced to 800 francs. I am now with my uncle's family and do not pay board. But I would look stingy if, before I leave I did not give a good amount to the servants and also offered a few pretty little gifts. After all this, my 800 francs will barely pay for my trip to Paris. To come to the point, you see, dear grandpapa, that I shall be obliged to borrow. I hope this will not make you angry. I assure you that it upsets me very much. I shall contact either Mr. Plicque or Mr. St. Avis. I shall take only what is absolutely necessary. I shall need also some books and clothes. It will be a saving if I buy everything in Paris as later on we will have to go through the expenses, just the same. I also promised Tonton (my aunt, Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) to have my portrait made for her and to be as thrifty as possible.

Farewell, my dear grandpapa, in two or three months, I hope I shall have the pleasure to embrace you. My affection to my good grandmamma and my aunts and uncles.

Your loving and  
obedient son, Alex  
Declouet