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PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in Paris, France,
to his aunt, Mrs. Christopher De l'Homme (Josephine Declouet), in St.
Martinville.

Paris, September 7, 1832

My dear, my beloved aunt,

I am still a little childish. I have just cried again shedding tears of pleasure, of sorrow, of emotion, of I don't know what else while reading your letter of June 22. For six days, it has been here and Mrs. Lanoix had neglected to send it to me because she was expecting me from Bordeaux. I arrived in Paris yesterday morning and Mrs. Lanoix is leaving for Le Havre today. Thus, you see, my dear Tonton, that I have not the time to talk at length with you. Yet, I am quite sorry about this as I have many things to tell you: Your dear letter threw my mind in such a state of agitation that a number of ideas constantly crowd my imagination. It seems to me that I am not the same man any longer, I am beginning to feel all the importance of my position and of my duties, I am beginning to open my eyes about the misfortunes of my family. O Lord! How I wish it might reserve to me to stop their course, to change fate!! But, no indeed, I don't want to hide anything from myself, I feel that I am not able yet to cope with the circumstances, I am only twenty years old. I am a young man without any experience, knowing nothing about business. My first studies I did well, I even received honors, but such studies were insufficient and my education has been missed by half that was not my fault. O deplorable system of education, what precious time has been lost in making out greek and latin words (which I have now almost forgotten) with frequent recourses to the dictionary or in observing meticulously meaningless religious duties. Yes, it is now that I am affected by this and it seems to me that my seven years of college

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have been, so to speak, a lost time. Since I left school I could have done much more than I have done. I know this, but I applied myself more to having a good time than to learn, and this is where I am wrong. But this is a wrong for which I forgive myself easily and which does not bring to me much remorse. To have a good time for two or three years of one's life, it seems to me that it is not too much. We must also (while we are young) take a little good time in this life, a life which is accompanied by so many sorrows! Furthermore, when I think of the type of amusement I permitted myself, I have almost no reproach for myself. I have not quite lost my time. I travelled with some fruitful results. As to the expenses involved, there also my conscience is clear. I spent a great deal, it is true, but I assure you that this has not been through lack of thrift. Thanks to God, I am not yet a spendthrift and it will be seen before long; then perhaps (in order to have probably the pleasure to find faults with me) one will judge me as being stingy and tight. But, you see, all this is immaterial to me. I have too independent a character to worry about what certain persons might say. I shall try to give them the lie through my behavior. Yes, my dear aunt, it is necessary now that I turn another page in my life. I must change my plans. My vacation is over and it is necessary to start working. I came to Paris to prepare me for it. I have already many books, but I am going to purchase a good supply for a library, worth while books about law, history, geography etc. On arriving in Louisiana, if one does not interfere with me, I shall place myself under the guidance of a learned and experienced man and there, I shall study, I shall work with all my strength. Within three or four years, I hope I shall be able to become the support and protector of my family, that I shall be able to place myself at its head, to watch for its interest

1832 and give it a rallying place. Such is my plan, it is not yet well developed but
Sept. 7 we will talk about it later on.
(con't.)

You see, my dear Tonton, that while I am talking to you, I always forget myself and that the little letters I announce to you at the beginning always end by covering three long pages. This happens in spite of myself, I cannot resolve myself to send blank paper to a person I love and who is so close to me. This time, however, I must stop, time is pressing and I still have several letters to write. I left my uncle Brognier's (Declouet) family in Bordeaux in good health with the exception of Fideline (his daughter) who was kept in bed for six days because of a strong fever accompanied by delirium; however at the moment of my departure, she was much better. Caroline (his daughter), Mrs. Sommeau is enormous, she is in her 9th month and will give birth shortly. After having expected Alexandre (Brognier's son) for one or two weeks, he finally arrived from Madrid. I have been delighted with him and we are as close to each other as if we had known each other for forty years. He is a charming society man, full of accomplishments and knowledge. He is a handsome, well-built man, and in his uniform of Captain Lancers, he is magnificent. Well, he is worthy to bear our name and I am sure he will bring it honor. He is supposed to leave for Havana in the month of November or of October. If I was not in such a hurry to be near my parents, I would be glad to leave with him, to see, on the way my uncle Brognier. But then I would arrive in Louisiana only in January and it is too far off. I would have liked to leave on the Bolivian but for a long time, it has been crowded with passengers and besides it leave too soon and I would not have time to attend to my business. I shall embark from Bordeaux where there are numerous and good opportunities for

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Louisiana. I shall return to Bordeaux toward the 20th or 25th of this month and
I promise you I shall take advantage of the first good chance. I shall certainly
be on board before the 15th of October at the latest. It is impossible for me to
write to my dear Catiche (Declouet Lastrapes) at this moment, later on, I shall
do so in order to give definite information about my departure. I don't need
to tell her the share I took in her misfortune, she knows me well enough to be
a judge of it. Kiss this beloved aunt for me, my dear uncles and all my dear
little cousins, dear little orphans. Farewell, farewell, I do not have time
either to write to my uncle Neuville (Declouet). Your cherished son kisses
you with all his heart.

Alexander Declouet

P. S. As to your portrait, my dear aunt, I want to be frank with you and warn
you that I am a little short of money and have not the means now to have it
done. Furthermore, you are going to see me soon. What need do you have of
my picture since I will be near you?