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PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in Bordeaux, France
to his aunt, Josephine Declouet de l'Homme in St. Martinville, La.
Bordeaux, November 6, 1832

My dear aunt,

Without any doubt, you have been expecting me for a long time and instead of my arrival you are receiving a letter in which I must announce to you my delay. It costs me a great deal, dear aunt, it cost me a great deal. Lord! If I could tear it and leave in his place. But circumstances have been stronger than my impatience. Upon my return from Paris, right away I shall leave for New Orleans. For a month I have been in Bordeaux, not any opportunity presented itself. This one (through which I am writing) is the first one. It is the Ballacken, a fine ship which leaves between the 5th and the 10th. Between the 10th and the 15th, Alexander (Declouet, Brognier Declouet's son), my godchild leaves for Havana (Cuba). Since we have known each other, we have been like two brothers. Because of a two-day-delay could I deprive myself of the pleasure, the happiness of crossing with him? How can we accept the idea of being at the same time on the sea and not be together?

My uncle (Brognier Declouet) who, as you know, cherishes me as his son and who, in all his letters, commands and orders his "little Clouet" to wait for his return or to go to see him on the way. Could I resist all this? Could I refuse my dear uncle when the occasion was so favorable? Could I do this? Should I do this? No. Yourself, you would have blamed me and my uncle would never have forgiven me especially in a time he needs so much consolation. (NOTE: In July 1832 there was an attempt to assassinate Brognier Declouet. He had his right shoulder broken by several bullets. This is when he sent for his only son, Alexander from Bordeaux.) But why speak so much

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(con't.)

about this? It looks as if I was trying to have you excuse me. No, because on the contrary, I believe that you approve me, but it is only to show you how much it took to make me decide to delay my departure and to prove to you what I told you, that the ensemble of circumstances has been stronger than all my impatience. So, you must see that my departure from here has been postponed for 10 days only. Add to this 15 to 20 days I shall spend with my uncle (Brognier Declouet) in Havana and it amounts in all to a month's delay. We shall leave from here on the 15th. Suppose that the crossing takes 45 days, we shall be in Havana at the beginning of January, twenty days with my uncle and this will bring me to the middle of February. You must think of waiting for me then all the month of February and a part of the month of March.

You will not neglect in the future to write to Havana care of Messieurs Torre Martel and Co. I would even say that this is necessary as my uncle Brognier, no doubt will be near you with a letter of apology for leaving. When you receive this letter, write to me right away and send your letters to Messieurs Peyroux and Rivarde who will take them to Havana.

Alexander (Declouet), your godchild, is very anxious to accompany me to the Attakapas. In one way, this would please me as you would know him better but, on the other hand, I don't know too well what to think of this. Moreover, I don't believe his father (Brognier Declouet) would agree. My uncle's latest news are quite recent. He is completely out of danger but it seems that his wound (from the assassination attempt) reopened and is still hurting him a great deal. By the way, my dear Tonton, when I announced to you this misfortune, I forgot to urge you and Catiche (Declouet Lastrapes) not to speak about it when you write. I am afraid you may have done so already.

1832 Up to now, they don't know the extent of their brother's misfortune. They
Nov. 6 were only told that he broke his arm when falling from his cabriolet (carriage).
(con't.) They are distressed about Alexander's departure and if they knew how this
thing happened they would never be able to accept the idea to be separated
from him.

Goodbye, my beloved aunt, kiss Catiche (Declouet Lastrapes) for
me. I wanted to write to her but did not feel up to it, it would have involved
too sensitive a question. Besides, she must know that she and you are the
same. I hope that she will be fair enough to me to believe that if I did not
write to her as often it is because I feared that my letters would not reach her
easily. Goodbye again. I am eager to kiss you and talk with you and the time
seems long. Forgive this little half page. Kiss my dear orphans (NOTE: He
must be referring to Marie Louise Benoit and Jean Baptist Benoit who lost
their father in 1823 and their mother in 1825. They would have been 15 and
12 years of age respectively). Speak often to them about me, I have so many
things to tell them. I am short of paper... I would have so many things to tell
them since they have been so unhappy. Remember me to all my relatives.
This poor Claire (Benoit Nee), I hope that Mr. (Pierre Louis) Nee will not be
cruel enough to take her to New Orleans and separate her from the only
relatives left to her. Oh! My Lord, when I think of all that my heart is heavy.
It seems to me that I should have been able to offer some consolation in her
mourning. But, goodbye, your beloved,

Alexander Declouet

P. S. I almost forgot to tell you that Caroline (Declouet Sommeau, Brognier
Declouet's daughter) gave us a third boy. I am the godfather and he will have

1832 the names of Eugene Alexandre. He is today 3 weeks old and he is very nice.
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(con't.) All the members of the family want to be remembered to you and asked me to
transmit to you all their affection.