

PERSONAL LETTER from Alexandre Declouet, Sr. in St. Martinville,
to his son, Paul Declouet at Louisiana College in Convent, La.
St. Martinville, April 29, 1854

My dear Paul,

I received yesterday with much pleasure your little letter of the 26th of this month and in order not to imitate your mother (Louise Benoit Declouet) who received some time ago your first letter and did not answer it, I am hurrying to answer you to show you how happy I am to have heard from you and also to encourage you to write to us often. Also, you announced to me that you are angry with your mother because she did not write to you, I would not like you to get angry with me also. I know that you lose your temper quickly and I would not want you to be angry with me also. I know that you become irritated easily and I do not want to incur your anger; it would be terrible if you became angry with Mama and with Papa also! But I am sure that when you receive these few lines you will calm down and your kind heart will triumph over your angry spirit.

I see, through your little letter, my dear child, that you need to study a great deal and apply yourself and as I think that you will continue to write to me often, I hope that before long, I shall have the satisfaction to be able to offer you congratulations about the progress you cannot fail to accomplish if you work with courage and with the determination and the desire not to waste your time at the college. It is a precious time, my dear child, and once lost, its loss cannot be offset. I am inclined to believe that you love us too much to hurt us and bring us sorrow when you know that nothing in the world would bring us more sadness and would mortify us more than to see you lazy, ignorant and behind your classmates. If you behave well, if you study well, you will see

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that the time spent in the college will fly like a happy and pleasant dream and that later on you will think of it with joy! To study well is not everything. You must apply yourself to have good manners, to be frank, polite and generous. Qualities coming from the heart are worth infinitely more than qualities coming from the head. But I would not know where to stop if I let myself be carried away into giving you all the recommendations, all the advices which flow in spite of myself from the endless source of my fatherly love.

I wanted to write to Clouet (Alexander, your brother), but this time, there is no chance, it will be for another day. I was very happy to hear that your good cousin Ferry took you out and brought you to Mr. Valcour Aime's. It is a great satisfaction for me to know that you are in the vicinity of such good relatives and friends and I do not doubt that you will know how to behave in order to be worthy of their kindness and their friendship. I could not urge you too much to act discreetly when you go out. Dress yourself properly but especially be clean. Take care of your hair and do not spare the soap. Nothing is more vulgar and coarse than to have dirty hands. Does Clouet still bite his nails? I shall ask Mr. Dufau to interfere to uproot this bad habit. How does it happen that Clouet did not dance also? So, you danced but you did not tell us with whom. However, it is very good, while being modest and reserved you should not be shy and unsociable, and should know how to get along according to the occasions.

Your little uncle (Jean Baptist Benoit) came last week by the Ceres. I think that Clouet must have received my third letter. I have not received the letter Mr. Dufau had announced to me. Do not forget to offer him my respects. Goodbye, my dear children, your mother and sisters join me to kiss you with

1854 all our affection,

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Your father,

Alexander Declouet

Handwritten in French. Original on file in Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, La.