

1855

Jan. 13

PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in St. Martinville to  
his son, Paul Declouet at Louisiana College in Convent, La.

Saturday, January 13, 1855

My dear child,

The letters we have received from you for some time gave us a great deal of pleasure. You should continue to write to us often and in taking your time and applying yourself a little more before long you will be able to write fairly well. I have seen with a strong satisfaction that you had already made a fairly good amount of progress, but you could easily do much better if you paid more attention. You make spelling mistakes you could avoid by looking for the way to write words and thinking in advance about grammatical rules. In order to learn how to write correctly you must never put a word or a sentence on your paper as long as you have any doubt on the way to spell or use a word and in such a case you must clarify your doubts by having recourse to your dictionary and your grammar. If for some time you are careful and give yourself a little trouble to search you will be surprised yourself by the ease with which you will be able to write and of the progress this will enable you to cover in a short time. Each letter thus written with care will be a good way to study and will prove very useful for you in your classes and to learn your lessons. Finally, I would like to see you applying yourself a little more in your penmanship which has room for improvement.

If I have not written to you more often, my dear Paul, it is because I thought that you will always have a share in the letters I write to Clouet (Alexander Declouet, Jr., your brother). I address them to one or the other but their content, my dear child, is always for both of you and I do hope that

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(con't.)

Clouet never fails to read to you my letters or to give them to you. My affection is the same for both of you and the advices I give you coming from the heart of your father and best friend are always for both of you. May God give me the grace that they will sink into you, that you will think of them often and seriously, and consequently that you will behave yourselves and apply yourselves to all your duties.

Clouet told me in his last letter that Mr. Dufau granted you the favor of three passes and spoke to me about conserving your mentions in order to obtain prizes. With those three permissions, I think you have enough and I strongly approve his ideas of keeping your mentions in order to exchange them for prizes. But the important point is to obtain such mentions! No mentions, no prizes, is it not so? Well, if I understand well the way it goes, no good behaviour, no diligence, no mentions. Consequently, if to obtain prizes, you must have mentions, and if in order to obtain mentions you must be good, courageous and zealous in your studies, I am in perfect agreement, with three passes you will have enough, according to my way of thinking. Study so as to gain as many mentions as you can. Make a large provision of them and save them preciousy in view of a good opportunity. I am happy to see your good dispositions.

You spoke neither about Clouet nor about your visit to your dear aunt Sylvanie! Tell me also if you went to see Dufouchar? I am afraid that you forgot about it. I would be curious also to be informed of your little expenses in town, of the money you took here. It is good to talk freely and frankly about this little business with your father.

Your mother (Marie Louise Benoit Declouet) received your letter

1855 with a great pleasure and she says that you are better than Clouet who does  
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(con't.) not write to her any longer. Your uncle (Benoit St. Claire) has received your  
letters and will write again soon. At the present time, he is very busy having  
a house (Fenwick) demolished in Catahoula, that I had given up to him and that  
he is going to have removed to the upper part of his property. Within a week  
or two, he will leave, I think, with his negroes, to get settled. For the first  
year, he expects to harvest in Tonton's Clos (his aunt's enclosed property).

Emile takes good care of your horse, but I am afraid it will not be  
easy for you to change him into a race horse. Clouet's horse is still at  
Valsin's who says he is splendid and very good.

Goodbye, my dear children, it is time for the mail, no more paper  
and I fear that you are getting bored. My letter is rather too long! Farewell,  
I am kissing you with all my heart,

Alexander Declouet