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PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet, Sr. in St. Martinville,
to his son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
St. Martinville, February 13, 1857

My dear boy,

I took a long time to write to you, but better late than never, don't you think so? I wrote only once to Clouet (Alexander, your brother) and I just learned through your letters brought by the last mail that he had received my letter. You can well believe, my dear child, that I have been deprived and sorry not to have been able to correspond with you more often. But you know how busy and harassed with business I am and it seems that business increases every day. This year especially my hands are full and my arms overloaded: a saw-mill, a bridge, a new refinery, etc., without counting other affairs which never end. My saw-mill is ready and in operation, doing very well. I believe I had not told you that I bought from the Leeds' Foundry, in town, a new sugar mill. It is very large and superb and could easily take care of 30 to 40 bushels a day. I am waiting any day for the workman who is going to build my bridge.

Your uncle and aunt Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) planted canes this year and I must have my old mill put up at Tonton's but their sugar harvest will not be ready for two years. You see that they are getting active in the Breaux Bridge region. Tonton was here yesterday when your two letters and Clouet's letter arrived. You can imagine how much we talked about you! She found your portraits striking in resemblance. I had them there in front of their eyes on my dresser but I cannot go into the time in my office without speaking of my ideas and my feelings with you! I cannot see them without asking God to grant me enough years to allow me to help you and guide you in the right direction during your first steps and your debut in a world where so many

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roads and dangerous lanes offer themselves in order to lead astray young and inexperienced persons. And what about your dear sisters who are still so young? Perhaps one day their brothers will be their only protectors. Therefore, my dear Paul, from now on, you must begin to think seriously of preparing yourself well through your conduct and good studies to properly fill the part that Providence holds in reserve for you. Have courage, my dear child, always courage and tenacity and I must tell you that I have been very happy to see through your letters that you are studying seriously and that you are satisfied with your school. Keep on the good work and you will see how very shortly everything will become easy and pleasant. Never give up! You must be realizing that I am letting my pen run at random but I feel at liberty with you, why not?

As soon as you can, you must apply yourself to French. You need to do so in order not to forget it. You probably learned through Mr. (Pierre Louis) Nee's letter to Clouet that I had passed by the city on my way to Baton Rouge. My trip gave me a very bad cold from which I have hardly recovered. Speaking about a cold, I could not tell you enough to be very careful, not to neglect any and above all, take necessary precautions not to catch any. Your dear Mother (Louise Benoit Declouet) worries about that as in a Northern climate neglected colds often engender dangerous and widespread lungs' and chest's troubles.

Nothing new, and by the way, on this very day, I have finished to plant. My canes being perfect I have a very beautiful plantation extending over five hundred arpents. A great extent of land for corn has been ploughed and on the whole my field-work is quite advanced. Mr. John takes care of that roundly.

Goodbye, my big boy, nothing else to say, my pen is reaching the end

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of the page and I don't want to begin another one. Your mother and sisters
join me to embrace you heartedly.

Your father,

Alexander Declouet

P. S. Your mother wrote to Clouet five days ago. Do not be too hopeful about
my seeing you before March. I expect Mr. Dinwiddie (principal of Brookland
School) to send me bulletins from time to time.