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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, March 5, 1857

My dear child,

I have just received your letter of the 20th and it gave me so much pleasure that I am hurrying to answer it. The one to your mother has been received about 10 days ago and it also gave us a great joy. I had just written to you at about that time otherwise I would have written to you, as I am doing now, to express all the satisfaction we feel when learning that you are pleased with your school and that you bring so much interest and courage to your studies and your education which is so important.

I have received also, sent by Mr. Dinwiddie (Principal of Brookland School), your bulletin for the last month and up to the fifteenth of February and it is as satisfying as I could have desired.

You are making me happy, my dear child, you should continue as you have started and you could congratulate yourself for having satisfied me and having fulfilled my strongest desires. I entirely trust Mr. Dinwiddie for the direction of your studies and I believe, as he does, that it is better to postpone French. The important point for the moment is to reach the level of the other classes such as English, Latin and Mathematics. But I plan to talk to you more at length another time.

I think that at the present time Clouet (Alexander, your brother) must be with you (if Mr. Dinwiddie has been able to receive him) because I had just written to him to urge him to enter a preparatory school when I received from him a letter in which he expressed the wish to do so in order to be better prepared for the University courses. It will be a great satisfaction for us to see

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you both under the same roof.

Being somewhat in a hurry, I shall give you some little news briefly. Your Mother (Louise Benoit Declouet), Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) and I went to see your dear sister Blanche a few days ago. It was last Saturday and we slept at Grand Coteau in Mr. Lague's home. We arrived at the (Sacred Heart) convent Saturday night and pleading our cause well, we obtained permission for your sister to go to sleep with us. You can imagine what a good night we spent. Ninise (Blanche) grew up a great deal and feels much better. She is getting used to the convent and the nuns are well pleased with her. It would be difficult to describe the joy of Christine and of Gabi (your sisters) when they saw their sister. Since the convent reopened on November 11, 1856, we had not gone to see her. I also went to the College (St. Charles College in Grand Coteau) to see Alex Frere and Douce who are well and told me they had received your letters.

Sunday night, your mother and I went to sleep at Malakoff (where his Uncle Jean Baptiste Benoit and Aunt Henriette LeBreton Benoit live) where you can imagine also that we spent a very good evening during which Paul and Clouet have not been forgotten. A few words now about the plantation. I believe I had already mentioned to you that my saw-mill had started and was running very well. On this very day, I outlined the foundations of my refinery and within two or three days they will start laying the bricks. I am expecting shortly my new refinery. Canes are beginning to grow up very well and encourage us to foresee a large and fine crop.

Soon, I shall write to Mr. Dinwiddie to ask him to take Clouet in his school; in the meantime, he can do so.

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I have not the time to write to Clouet through this mail, therefore,
you could send him this letter and he would prepare himself to go to Mr.
Dinwiddie's. Mr. Allison and his children were pleased that you remembered
them and send their greetings to you and Clouet.

Farewell, Mama, Papa, Christine, Gabi embrace you as they love
you, that is to say with all their hearts.

Your father and friend,

Alexander Declouet