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May 13

PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Benoit Declouet in St. Martinville,  
to her son, Paul Declouet, at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.  
St. Martinville, May 13, 1857

My dear Paul,

A few lines in haste to announce to you our quick trip and happy return to the Attakapas with your dear little sister Christine who is very well and delighted to be with Gabi (Gabrielle, your sister). She is walking everywhere. I find a big change in her within two days. Her coloring is coming back quickly and I see that the country air is more beneficial to her than the city air. She never tires of walking all over the plantation, I cannot keep her in the house. This morning her neck is better than ever and I think that within a few days she will not need any more bandage. Her scarlet fever was nothing at all and the doctors decided that it was a model scarlet fever as one rarely sees. Up to now, my dear Paul, when I look at your little sister I cannot believe that she is the same one the good God returned to us in good health after such serious dangers.

All of us are feeling well and we kiss both of you as tenderly as we love you. I find it extraordinary that you have not received a long letter from me before my departure for the city. I believe, however that it is my fault. I fear that the address was wrong. I regret so much more that you have not received it because it contained many details forgotten today, finally, it covered eight pages. I wish you more luck for this one at least you will see that your dear Maman thinks of you and believes that you deserve the trouble she takes in writing to you from time to time.

All the members of the family are well and send their greetings. Gabi has a bad cold without being really sick, she coughs quite often. I found

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her much fatter and above all, more spoilt than usual. Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme, your aunt) overdid it during our trip.

Farewell, my dear child, or rather my dear children. Write to us often, it is the only thing which consoles us a little from being parted from you.

The servants send their regards, especially Marceline and Francis. The horses are tired from doing nothing, all of them are fat and healthy. Farceur (your dog) also is well. He entrusted me with his respects for his master. He was the happiest one when we arrived, he insisted upon embracing your Papa (Alexander Declouet).

A thousand kisses to you and my dear Clouet (Alexander, your brother). I find this little letter a thousand times happier than I am, you will touch it and see it while I have been deprived for so long of this happiness. Goodbye, dear Paul, I am afraid to miss the mail time.

Your dear mother,

Louison Declouet