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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, August 27, 1857

My dear Paul,

Although you have not written to me for a long time and you should not be stingy about letters to your papa, with pleasure I am writing you these few lines so you would not always go to the post office for nothing. Moreover, I understand and appreciate your disappointment at not hearing from us more often and this especially because of the worry we feel when we have no news from you for over a week. Clouet's (Alexander, your brother) last letter (of the 17th) came just on time because we were beginning to be somewhat uneasy not having heard from you for more than two weeks. As to you, my dear children, you must not worry because really I do not have time to write often. I have never been as busy as this year and you know it is quite an event for your dear Mama (Louise Benoit Declouet) to make up her mind to grab pen and paper! But. This does not prevent the fact that your father and your mother only think and talk about their dear boys - do they deserve this? You see that to know that you are far away, among strangers, is for us a constant concern and our only consolation is to hear from you often. Each of you should have his own week to write. It would be only one letter to write every fifteen days. As, I just told you, it is impossible for me to write often, in the future I shall send you once in a while, a newspaper from St. Martinville (once a week if I don't forget). In place of a letter, this newspaper will mean to you that everything is all right at home. Besides, you will find many interesting things to read. I already sent an issue of the Democrate de St. Martin which just appeared at St. Martinville. I think that before long a fight will begin with the interesting

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"Courrier du Teche" and then razors and scissors, the hair will fly - look out from under and we shall laugh, but remember that each newspaper you receive will in some way mean to you "Good news from home". It is an easy way to correspond but as you know I am a resourceful man. Since my last letter to Clouet, nothing new happened here except the death of this poor William Relly who was declining. My work at the refinery still goes ahead but I have a great deal to do and I am afraid I shall be late in beginning to grind, perhaps only on November 1. We had too much rain and over half of the corn was lost. At the present time, they are putting together my two machines with four kettles and are getting ahead. They also work on the furnace for the bagasse (cane remnants) and I think that the bricklayers will finish between the 15th and the 20th of September. I am expecting the engineer to start the machinery. He had come but went to town for a few days.

Mrs. Ganuchau and Mrs. Lebreton and Louise (grandmother, mother, and sister of Henriette Lebreton Benoit, your aunt) arrived here the day before yesterday accompanied by Edmond, the father, and also Mr. Louque, Charles's brother-in-law, and his two little boys. All of them are in the upper part of the region. I do think that these ladies will go to Grand Coteau. Mrs. Ganuchau and Cecee (Louise) are supposed to spend a month with Mimi (Henriette Lebreton Benoit) and Mrs. Lebreton and Edmond will spend a week. Edmond is getting ready to leave soon to take his son to school. It seems he has made up his mind to put him in Mr. Dinwiddie's school (Brookland School) and in such a case I believe I can trust you to take care of him, etc. I even believe that it is for this reason this school has been chosen.

I understood through Clouet's letter that you must have very little

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money left and I am writing at this very moment to Darby and Tremoulet to send you about a hundred dollars. You should have warned me sooner. I see by your trip to Washington that travels are expensive! I want to believe that you do not spend carelessly but whatever happens I want to urge you firmly never to borrow. You should write to me in advance about your needs. But farewell, good night, no more paper, and to think that when I began I expected to write to you only a few lines. Goodbye, my dear Paul. This letter is for you. Receive for you and Clouet the affectionate caresses of your mother, your sisters and your father and sincere friend,

Alexander Declouet