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Sept. 9      PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Benoit Declouet in St. Martinville,  
to her son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.  
St. Martin parish, September 9, 1857

My dear Paul,

I received yesterday your letter of August 19 and I answer it immediately because I admit, my dear children, that I am too lazy to let your dear letters always without answers but you know, my dear Paul, that children owe everything to their mother. I think too often about both of you and this is what prevents me to write to you oftener. You will hear from me about the same time you receive my letter. Edmond Ganuchau, the father, left yesterday for New Orleans taking his son Charles, I believe, to the same school where you are. He will give you news of us verbally as he came to the Attakapas to accompany his mother, Mrs. Lebreton and Louise Lebreton (Henriette Lebreton Declouet's mother and sister) who already left, being ill last week. Coralie Dufouchard (Mrs. Denis Fouche) and her three children, Azelie Dufouchard and their brother, Charles, arrived last night for, I think, a month. They are at Tonton's (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme, your aunt). The young man must stay only one week. I think they will have a good time over there during a month, yet not as much as last year because Miss Hegilda is not coming this summer, therefore there will be less tricks and practical jokes. My dear Paul, not knowing what to send you from home, through Mr. Ganuchau, we supposed that your dear little sisters' pictures would give you more pleasure than anything else and he promised me to put them into your hands. He will be able to tell you if the resemblance is good, he is a better judge than you are as he has just seen the two children. We find them very good. Gabi (Gabrielle), while her

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portrait was made was afraid to have her mouth open. She paid so much attention that she closed her mouth. She pretends that the portrait would have not been as good as Titine's (Christine) if she had forgotten and had left her mouth open, which, as you know, is often her habit.

I am sorry that Blanche (your sister) was not here at that time as she, also, would have taken a trip to Virginia. It will be for another time. Her vacations start next Sunday, the 13th. Your father (Alexander Declouet) is leaving Saturday to go to get her. Gabi has not been very well for the last two weeks. She has a little slow fever. Dr. Radlinsky says it is nothing, just growing pains. She is not in bed, she plays all day long as usual. Yet, she lost a good deal of weight. She sends kisses to both of you, on your eyes, your foreheads, your mouths, everywhere, everywhere, as she says. Christine also tells you to pay attention to her neck and you will see her scar still very apparent. I am telling you with sorrow about Mrs. Rosemond Berard's death. She was buried Sunday last. Her death also pained us a great deal because she died without seeing her husband who has been North for two or three months. He is travelling for his health and is expected any day.

Goodbye, my dear children. We are feeling well and embrace you both tenderly. Blanche will write to you often during her holidays. I forgot to tell you that we had Mrs. Dubuchet for three weeks. She had come to take baths from the fountain's water, they soothed her pains. She went home last week. The little northern winds of the end of August made her decide to go. She is such a good person that I would have liked to keep her longer. Gabi was crazy about Aunt Dubuchet. She cried the day of her departure and made her promise to come to see her often.

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The refinery is still progressing slowly. I believe it will be finished just on time for the grinding season. The bricklayers have not finished yet and the engineers started to set the machinery a week ago. I believe it will be ready on time. The crop is splendid and a great deal is expected if cold weather does not come too soon.

Marceline insisted that I had her portrait taken to send it to you. I answered her that I did not want to frighten all of Virginia with her ugly face. She pretends she is not ugly enough for that. She and all the others want to be remembered to you. I forgot to tell you that we lost William Kelly. I believe he had a bad fever some time ago. Thomas is going to enter the Grand Coteau College at the reopening. They are on their vacations now. Your dog and horses are well and present their respects to you, very humbly. Your negro Francis is well, sends his greetings, has been the bricklayer's servant since March.

Goodbye. Your mother,

Louise Declouet