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PERSONAL LETTER from Benoit St. Clair in Vermillionville, to
his nephew, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
December 23, 1857

My dear Paul,

Only today, I answer your letter dated I don't know when. I should have answered sooner but you know that in the country people are generally lazy when it comes to writing for the reason that all our occupations are outside, but you are constantly or almost constantly near paper, ink and pens, you would write oftener if you thought of us a little more, and you should do that as it is good for your style.

A few days ago, Marie heard from Clouet (Alexander, your brother), she had not had the time to answer yet but will do so very soon.

I had sad news from your papa's (Alexander Declouet) home, whooping cough played havoc among the piccaninnies. He already lost four or five of them and for as many there is not much hope. Your little sisters have not contracted it yet.

The first frost we had caused damages to the canes. Your papa had a series of bad sugar crops but since he works on the canes previously cut off he has excellent merchandise. I hope this will continue like this to the end.

Nothing new except I have decided to go into the sugar business. I set up the old Malakoff machine and I hope to succeed better with the canes than with the cotton.

Goodbye, my dear Paul, kiss Clouet for me and both of you believe in the friendship of

Your uncle who loves you like his own children,
Benoit St. Clair

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(con't.)

P. S. Greetings to Charles and tell him that Mimi (Henriette, my wife)
asks him if he has forgotten her.