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PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her  
Mar. 16 son Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.  
St. Martin parish, March 16, 1858

My dear Paul,

I am coming to let you know that your letter of February 25 arrived and gave us much pleasure because of the progress you made in your handwriting which is better than usual and I find your style better also, although you need to apply yourself. And after all that, I find that both of you are getting very lazy. You do not write to us any longer as often as you used to. I came back from Grand Coteau a few days ago. Ninise (Blanche, your sister) grew a great deal. She is as tall as I am, she is still rather thin. She does not feel too well. I find her quite changed without being sick with the exception of rather frequent stomach pains. She was sad all day long and cried a great deal when I left the convent. I believe she was sure that I was going to take her home for a while but I did not find her sick enough to make her leave the convent. She is too old to make her lose her time. At the bottom of all this, I believe that your dear sister is going through some confusion as it happens often to children. She argues with all the nuns except with Mrs. Martinez who is very kind and obliging to her. Finally, I hope that all this will be over and will let you know as soon as I hear from her. She had already received your duck-billed lady. She mailed it to us and it amused a great deal your little sisters. Christine wants to have it framed to preserve it better. Both feel well and kiss you tenderly. Gabi (Gabrielle, your sister) gave me a big amount of messages for all of you but I have no time today. She sends greetings and tells you that she is so anxious to see both of you. She is still a chatterbox and quite amusing. She constantly speaks about you and is

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beginning to count the time from now to your vacations.

Mrs. Chevalier de l'Homme has been here since yesterday. She sends her friendly greetings and wishes to see you. Last night we went to see Mr. Godard who does some magic tricks. He made some very puzzling ones. He had an excellent clown who really amused the children. He was supposed to climb in a balloon last Sunday but he gave it up because there was too much wind on that day. They left St. Martinville this morning. He had come in a pretty boat on which one could see white Negroes singing and dancing. On board, there were also two little twin Negresses tied to each other on the side. They sang and did some little tricks. I did not see them but heard that it is quite curious.

I saw Mr. Martin Voorhies last night. He always asks about you, Felix also. He left college and people say that he studies law at St. Martin. I think you have received Papa's (Alexander Declouet) letter to Clouet (Alexander, your brother) and now you must know how you stand about your religion. You are not obliged to attend their prayer services if you don't care. My opinion is that I prefer you do not attend if it is repulsive to you. I see with pleasure, my dear Paul, that you are firmly attached to the Catholic religion in which you were reared and during the vacations, I want you to make your first communion under Mr. Jan at St. Martinville. We also have received your bulletins. Your Papa was very satisfied. Goodbye, my dear children. Be good, apply yourselves very well so that you can rejoin us as soon as possible. All of us feel very well and kiss you. Everything is well up there and Little Uncle (Jean Baptiste Benoit, my brother) says he will scold you because you neglect him too much.

Write to Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme, your aunt) oftener than you do and to Blanche also. All the servants send their regards, also

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Francis and Rosette. Tonton Lubin all of them seem so anxious to see you.

Goodbye, I do not want to write to you such long letters but more often. The old sugarmill has been torn down and soon Little Uncle will erect it on his plantation. Then, soon, it will be the old house's turn. Goodbye, my dear Paul, embrace Quaite (Alexander, your brother) for me. Farceur (your dog) is well, your horses also. Tell Quaite that Cairo is well trained. He goes to the water and retrieves perfectly. Farewell, my dear children. I cannot stop when I am writing to you. Goodbye,

Your dear mother,

Louise Declouet