

1-6

1859
May 10

PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet, Sr. in St. Martinville,
to his son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
St. Martinville, May 10, 1859

My dear Paul,

As lately your dear mother (Louise Benoit Declouet) wrote to you rather often I don't feel I have to hurry to answer your letters of April 7 and 26. The first one gave me a great deal of pleasure as I saw in it your good will and your desire to agree with my ideas and my judgment regarding your studies. The second one (of the 26) was an answer to a few lines I addressed to you after I received, from Mr. Dinwiddie (principal of Brookland School), a bulletin far from being satisfying to me (that was before I received your letter of the 17th). I see in that second letter that you found my little scolding too harsh, but you must admit, however, that such a bulletin could not have pleased me. I saw in it that you were attending only two classes since at the item "English Compositions" there was written "entirely omitted" and naturally I could surmise that with two classes only you had almost nothing to do. This is why I was asking you how you were spending your time. Even after the explanations given in your last letter, I am still wondering what you are doing about your English. You do not speak about it, you tell me only that you are studying Latin, Algebra and French and at the same time, you admit that you do not study "very hard". Now my dear son, you must realize that you are reaching quickly the age when you are a man and if you do not manage to offset lost time through a firm and continued application, your education will be bankrupt. Can you foresee such a result in a calm way and without serious thinking? Can you accept the idea to see, placing themselves ahead of you, a crowd of young men of your age whose education was not made as easy as yours was? I am repeating to you, it is my

1859
May 10
(con't.)

duty to make you realize (as much as a friendly father's voice and advices can do) that you should not lose an hour, a minute. Where there is a will, there is a way - and you must shake off and drive away this feeling of depression which can only spoil the best future and should never take hold of a young, courageous and strong heart.

But coming back to your studies, I must tell you that although I see the importance of a classical education, I attach more value to a good and solid English and French education and that I would feel sorry to see you neglecting those two languages in favor of Latin and Greek. Through your letters, I see that you still need to apply yourself more to English, as to French, although I cannot judge it through our correspondence, I do fear that it still needs more improvement than your English. Well, my dear son, very likely, this is enough for today, to inform you about my opinions. If you can accept it, I believe that some day you will be grateful for it. May you never have to say: "Why did I not listen to Papa!" May you never have to reproach yourself for something!

In a letter to your mother, Clouet (Alexander, your brother) spoke about remaining at Greenwood for 6 months more (until February). I have no objection and it would even please me especially if he devotes this time to serious studies. But if such is his decision, I am of the opinion he should not come home during the vacations. Meanwhile, I shall write to him on this subject.

As your mother gave news about home, etc. and the time to mail my letter is coming I am ending without adding little pieces of news which, I know, might interest you. Besides, everything is as usual. The harvest appears to

1859
May 10
(con't.)

be good and we had this week two excellent rains which came just on time. The house is getting ready but will be finished only at the end of July. Old Cook works there and is still as nice as when you knew him. In case of fire, I shall not be lacking firemen here. Your sisters are getting along very well and are very fond of Miss Laurent who gives much attention to their school. One of Balthazar's little girls joined it. She is a very good child.

I do not remember if I ever told you that I sold Plaisir to B. Champagne's auction for \$98, payable in a year. Have you received \$50 I sent you a rather long time ago? Goodbye, my eyes tire quickly when I am writing. Greetings to Albert and George Ferry and Charles Ganucheau also.

Your father and sincere friend,

Alexander Declouet