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1859
Dec. 6

PERSONAL LETTER from Henriette Lebreton St. Clair at Malakoff
Plantation, La., to her nephew, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood
Depot, Virginia.

Malakoff Plantation, December 6, 1859

My dear Paul,

Your letter which reached me a few days ago gave us a great pleasure. We are very happy to see that you share the affection we feel toward you. Your absence leaves here a great emptiness so, with all my heart, I wish to see you back among us.

Since the departure of my dear Tato (Henri, my son), two months ago, I did not go to your home but I had rather frequent news. Your mother came here once. She looks quite well, but I heard that Ninise (Blanche, your sister) has stomachaches strong enough to make her go to bed. I went to see them lately.

Our cane harvest is over. Dry weather and freeze reduced it by half. It is unfortunate, but we have to accept this and get very busy about the next crop.

We never see Clouet (Alexander, your brother), he was the overseer during the cane harvest, he could not go anywhere. Your father (Alexander Declouet) will not obtain as much as he had hoped yet his crop will give a good return.

News here are very rare. I do not go out at all but on the other hand I read the newspapers and I followed with interest the details of the Harpers Ferry affair. This gives me a great fear for the future. It will start again in the other states which have slaves and sooner or later will end by bringing much misfortune, because some whites are at the head and abolitionists help them in

1859 an underhand way. It is very sad to feel that way, especially when I see
Dec. 6 holidays approaching. I am always worried. It is usually that time that stirs
(con't.) in them their instincts for freedom which had remained dormant for a while.
Well, we must have the courage to accept our situation and hope that the future
will not bring us anything bad.

I had news from your family recently and everybody is feeling well.
My dear child always studies a music score.
Here, Georges also is studying piano. He says that he will play delightful duets
with Tato.

Farewell, my dear friend. Kiss Charles and Rico for me. I am
sending you a thousand kisses. Your uncle (Jean Baptist Benoit, my husband)
asked me to convey his greetings.

Affectionately yours,

Henriette St. Clair

P. S. Your french is good. I thought you would have forgotten more. Study
your English, you will perfect your French in Paris. Clouet is speaking about
going to the island of Cuba and then to go to see you, but it is only a plan.