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PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
St. Martinville, March 24, 1860

My dear Paul,

I received this morning your letter of the 14th of this month. Gabi (your sister) is very well, not quite as big and fat as usual. I believe that growing makes her look thinner. She says that she has started a letter for you a few days ago but I cannot tell you when it will leave. As you know, it is quite an important affair for Gabi to mail a letter. She was not pleased at all today because a certain person was curious enough to read her letter she had left at school. She resented that and pretends that she did not refrain from telling that person what she thought on that matter.

Papa (Alexander Declouet) spent the day at Mr. Dauterive's who had written to him to come to help him to choose the location of a new refinery he intends to build. He expects to set up a fine and strong steam engine. He (papa) will come home tonight.

Clouet (Alexander, your brother) also spent the day away. He was at Mr. St. Denis Deblanc for a fishing party in the lake with the gentlemen. He has not returned yet. The school is being closed until Monday morning. The little girls are playing in the yard. Blanche (your sister) is practising her piano, Miss Laurent went up to her room and I am writing to you and I do not know if I can continue for very long as the sun is about to set and what is worse, the mosquitoes are already biting me as they do in the summer and the flies! They must think it is July or August. Such are this life's little miseries, we have to accept them.

You told me that it is cold over there. Cold is not a word for us in

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(con't.)

Louisiana, yet, I must tell you it has not been hot so far. Spring is slow to come this year. Mornings and evenings are still cool, however the vegetation is rather in advance. The yard is green, the trees are covered with leaves, the lilacs have buds and within a few days will give us their perfume. The banana tree froze as far down as the ground but will grow again. Almost all the fig trees are frozen. Winter has been very severe this year so we lost a very large number of animals, almost all our sheep died. My hens, turkeys and geese are hatching, if this may interest you.

Lately, I went to see Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) with Papa. She was feeling well. Your uncle (Jean Baptist Benoit) and the rest of the family also. Mimi (Henriette Lebreton Benoit, your aunt) is still in town. Mrs. Chevalier is no longer at Tonton's. She moved out a few days ago. Mr. Charles has a quantity of workmen. Mr. Bell is building his house and Pierre his sugar mill. Noemi (de l'Homme) is still at Tonton's home. We are going to take possession of the new house any day, only to sleep as there are so many flies that we will still eat in the old dining room for quite a long time, I believe. Charlotte has another daughter and Eugenie James also had one in the last few days.

Goodbye, all of us are feeling well and kiss you with all our hearts. I am telling you with pleasure that Miss Laurent's foot is quite well. She does not limp any longer. She sends you her friendly greetings. Your father has not sold any of your horses. Goodbye, my dear Paul. I lack space on my paper and it is getting dark. Goodbye, your mother,

Louise Declouet

Handwritten in French. Original on file in Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette, La.