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PERSONAL LETTER from C. W. Gay at Staunton, to his friend,  
Paul Declouet, in St. Martinville, La.

Staunton July 15, 1860

Excuse lead pencil writing. I am too lazy this evening to write with a pen.

Pa and Ma send you their kind regards.

Dear Paul,

That friendship which began between us so pleasantly at Greenwood and which I am sure exists, still makes me anxious to know how you are spending the vacation away down in Louisiana. I hope you are realizing your most pleasurable anticipations and enjoying all the privileges and happiness which "home" affords.

Frere Tom Roane and I came up on the 25th and went to the Institute celebration that night. It was quite a splendid affair. I wish you could have been there to see the display of beauty. The fairest was Miss Ellen Luckett, a lady of whom Louisiana ought to feel proud. The music was fine and the exercises interesting. Miss Taylor of Norfolk read a beautiful valadictory address which she had written. Votre amie (your friend) Miss Ada received her diploma. I went to the cars (railroad) next morning to see the fair ones leave and I had to bid many sad adieus. Just think Paul, I made six or eight girls cry like babies. I don't know whether it was because parting with me was to them so sad or because I squeezed their hands too hard. Tom Roane found out a tenth cousin at the celebration and becoming quite smitten with her went as far as the University with her Tuesday and returned to Staunton on the afternoon of the same day. He spent a week with me in which time we flew around somewhat with the "femmes" (girls), but not as much as we would have

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done had not the weather been so warm. Frere staid two weeks with us. We enjoyed ourselves by visiting, riding about on horseback, etc., etc. I feel somewhat lonesome since he left. He will stop as he comes down on his way home about the 20th of August. On account of the weather being so warm we did not go to the celebration at the University. Everybody who heard Voorhies says he made a splendid oration. I heard that the other speeches and at Harrison's celebration were very good indeed, but that old cock or cox or cocke (which is it?) gave them a very poor supper. I believe Miss M. Lockett was the only Institute who stopped to attend the celebration. I went to church this morning but things do not look as lively and pretty there since the Instituters left, though the "flower of the flock", Miss L(uckett), is still here and will be all summer. I have not tried to see her as she is immured in the inaccessible Institute prison, but I sent her a pretty bouquet last evening and I hope that the silent but eloquent language of the flowers will speak for me. Paul, a crowd of Institutes went to the cave the last week we were at Greenwood. If we had just known it we could have met them there so easily. Only one young fellow (Bob Luckett) went with them. I believe old Phillips and Koerber were along. I think if I had known it I'd have gone for I was through with my studies and had nothing to do. Couldn't we have had a glorious time helping the girls thru that place called "fat man's misery"? I often think with pleasure of our romantic old trip to the cave - winding our way through the mountain recesses - crossing those beautiful silvery little streams - going along those little paths thru the woods and scattered over that old field where Jack Cooke was shooting the larks - and then of the fun we had and of old Shribe the next day. I think I shall go to the "Nat'l. Bridge" and Peaks of Otter

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soon. How I wish you were here to go with me! I went to a big circus last night; it was quite a fine one. Let me know how Alek (Alexander Declouet) and Schaumburg are getting on in Europe. Have you been to New Orleans - how are Ganucheaus? Remember me to them when you see them.

Paul, let me know all about what you are doing and be assured I shall be interested. You know how I used to like to sit and talk with you about Louisiana life etc., etc. I suppose you will come up the 1st of October. I have to go to Greenwood the 1st September. I enclose you a circular Mr. D. (Dinwiddie, principal of Brookland School) sent me the other day.

Well Paul, I am going to church tonight and shall look at the corner where Ada used to sit and shall think of you, her and old Miss Sheffey (the old maid); she is here now. Have you any message to send her. I will not however kiss her for you. Write very soon.

I am truly your friend I. V. A.

C. W. Gay