

1-15  
1861  
Jan. 22

PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.  
St. Martinville, January 22, 1861

My dear Paul,

I am answering your letter of December 30 which gave me and all of us a great deal of pleasure. I am satisfied to see that you spent well your vacation from Christmas to New Year's Day. At that time, we had more rain than needed and the bad weather has been lasting since that time. The ground is too damp to continue planting, but luckily it is already in advance. The ball of last Wednesday in New Iberia was charming. The young ladies danced a great deal and had a good time. Papa (Alexander Declouet) also danced well. Could you guess who was one of the young ladies's main partners? I bet you could never guess: Mr. Mathias Livy, otherwise called Livy Chickens. He was very well dressed but the young ladies pretend that his pipe gave him an awful smell. He seems to be a courageous and tireless dancer. He was escorting to the ball one of his sisters, said to be rather elegant but with a Jewish type so a duplicate of Livy Chickens. You know furthermore, that in a free country many things are permitted.

Ninise (Blanche, your sister) is going to write to you shortly and she will be able to give you more details about the ball than I can. You must admit that it is very sad, my dear Paul, to talk about balls and lively things at a time when our country is in such a condition of disorder and grave dangers. But what can we do? We must spend the time and not bury ourselves before our death. I get heedless as much as possible about the conditions, waiting for the hour of sorrow to come. Our poor Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) is a pitiful sight. She spent several days with us before Papa's departure for Baton Rouge.

1861  
Jan. 22  
(con't.)

Finally, he left Friday last, on the 18th, very sad and all were distressed. Christine and Gabi (your sisters) could not be consoled. Gabi, especially, was sobbing. You know how easily she cries.

Miss (Aurore) Favrot went back with Papa. She left her little sister (Octavine) at Mrs. St. Laurent's boarding school. The reopening of the school was Sunday after mass. The child seemed satisfied and quite resigned to live in a boarding school. Even dear little Corinne (your sister) was distressed when Papa left. I believe that he hugged her too hard. I am dying for the time you can see her. She is beginning to be very interesting, her mind progresses every day. She laughs very often and knows all of us. Her eyes are still blue. In a word, she is the pet of the family.

Well, what about the State of Virginia? What is it doing? What are the people deciding to do? I think that the Convention here will decide quickly upon what is best for the State's interest, between now and March 4. I fear this day like pest. I hope that if the classes at the University are suspended you will not delay coming home unless you can continue your education even if the classes stop, which I doubt. Tonton already is picturing you on a battlefield against the Northerners and the Blacks. Papa also. She already sees him leaving for the war. I am speaking about that with tears in my eyes. I beg you, my dear child, do not accept any kind of commitment without your father's consent and above all mine. You are so much needed here. Enough about this subject as I could never finish my letter.

The garden is very pretty now and the yard also. They pruned the lilacs, the pecan trees and all the shrub of the garden which offers a charming vista. The new gardener has much skill. Everything is well up there Sunday.

1861 I have not seen yet Mimi's (Henriette Lebreton Benoit, your aunt) little daughter  
Jan. 22 (Arthemise). Tonton told us that her appearance is spoilt by her fat. She is  
(con't.) enormous.

Poor Madelaine. Johnson's wife, is very unlucky with her children. One of them almost died from Lockjaw but is better now and the physician is hoping to save her. She has another child who is very ill now, the one called Louisiane. She has serious colics with other complications. I consider her as hopeless and I am sending for Mr. Laureal immediately. Those are the only sick persons on the plantation. Therese had a boy a few days ago. Poor old Rosette fell down lately and hurt herself but she has been back on her feet for two or three days, although still suffering from this fall. I wish she can recover well. At her age, one does not need such a set back.

We have violets in abundance. The camelia bush of the Chretien garden is covered with flowers and buds but it is getting damaged. Every one wants cuttings and makes it looking barer every day. The gardener will transplant it here after its blooming season is over. I fear it may make it perish but we do not enjoy it at all where it is now. It is there for the passers-by and above all for the greedy ones who denude it every day of its branches and flowers.

It is said that the Voorhies and the Fournets and especially Mr. Valsin and Mr. Laloire were enraged at Papa in the last election but their influence did not work as there has never been a stronger majority than the one Mr. Alcibiade and Papa received in the last election. They are mad. Imagine that we have been told that Felix Voorhies had not voted for Mr. Edgar but for Papa. If this is true, I think it comes from the Potier family (his wife's family) who have always been in favor of your father.



1861  
Jan. 22  
(con't.)

Miss Laurent still is not well. She charged me to kiss you for her.

Goodbye, my dear Paul, we embrace you and wish to see you. Take care not to leave to go anywhere except to Louisiana if the classes are interrupted as we wish, as every night I die of dread. I pretend to be brave on account of Miss Laurent and Ninise because they might get sick out of this. Every night they hear doors being closed and opened, people walking, screaming. Geese and dogs are noisy on each moonlight night, make such an uproar. Finally, if at all possible we would be delighted to have you as our guardian. We have the gardener who lodges in Clouet's (Alexander, your brother) former room and the supervisor who occupies the workmen's room. In an urgent case, we would call them.

Goodbye, my dear Paul, I forget myself for too long when I chat with you and I might miss today's mail. Goodbye.

Your mother,

Louise Declouet

P. S. I am expecting news from Papa tomorrow. I forgot to tell you that Alfred Lastrapes has put his son in Jefferson College, near the river, formerly Louisiana College. Goodbye again, I don't have time to reread this long letter. Overlook omissions and above all mistakes. Your mother who is dying to embrace you and to see you near her.