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1861 PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her
Mar. 16 son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
St. Martinville, March 16, 1861

My dear Paul,

I am coming to answer your letter of March 1st announcing to me your safe arrival at the University. I also received a little note from Papa (Alexander Declouet) yesterday announcing to me his departure from Montgomery for New Orleans. He did not even say if he will be coming soon to the Attakapas. Yet, I think that once he is in the city he will come to see us within a few days. I assure you that I am tired of this Convention or Congress, whatever it is called, but at the same time our poor country is in such a state of disorder and confusion that it is fair that sensible people do something to improve politics and business in general. May God grant that they succeed quickly and above all avoid a war, the greatest curse which might befall us.

You must know that our dear Clouet (Alexander, your brother) must have left Liverpool on February 16 and I am quite worried as I feel he should have arrived here. I feel calmer however thinking he might have been delayed on the way to the University to see you. This must have delayed his trip for a few days. In spite of all my supposition, I cannot overcome my torment and my fears about the dangers of such a long voyage. I live with the hope that tomorrow mail will bring me good news from him. According to his calculation from Paris he should be in Jersey City about the 20th of February and at the Attakapas during the first ten days of March. And here we are already on the 16th. I don't know any longer what to think about this delay.

Miss Laurent is a little better but still very thin and changed and above

1861 all with such a feebleness that she cannot leave her bed without fainting spells.
Mar. 16
(con't.) The physician insists she is not in danger, it is just a question of time that I find eternal. Think that tomorrow will be 7 weeks she has been in bed. She told me yesterday that the condition of her thinness frightens her and she does not think she will ever be able to get out of bed. She is very sad about her condition. That contributes a great deal to prevent her recovery but it is involuntary. It comes from nervous sickness. Her sister, Mrs. Communny came to see her. She left Wednesday last. The young ladies received your invitations and I received your bulletin yesterday.

The cane crop is magnificent and promises a great deal during a good year. Spring seems to appear for good. The countryside is already very pretty, everything is green everywhere and I still think oftener about you while waiting for Clouet and with a heavy heart I think you will be the only absent one within a few days if God wishes so. If you could see our dear little Corinne (your sister) you would be crazy about her. I am sure of it and you could not believe that she is the same child you left in September having only skin over bones. Now, she is fat, rosy and plump, in a word quite attractive. She is very white. Her eyes a pretty shade of blue with eyelashes and eyebrows almost black and her little hair is dark. She is spoilt by every one. Her mind is progressing more and more. I am waiting for warm days to have a little portrait made of her in order to send it to you. I want her to be with short sleeves and decolletee so that you can see her dear little neck and her pretty and plump little arms. Enough because when I speak of Corinne, I love her so much that I go rambling. She has a little cold and Gabi (your sister) also without being ill, yet, Gabi had a little fever last night and did not want her breakfast this morning. She is big and fat as can be

1861 and red cheeked like a German girl. She is telling you that she is uglier than
Mar. 16 usual because she is getting new teeth and the line is all broken up. Christine
(con't.) (your sister) is practicing her piano at this moment. She grew much fatter
lately and is asking if you are observing Lent this year. Blanche (your sister)
and she are the models of the household. They abstain from meat very strictly
but I have a dispensation because of my dear little Corinne.

Goodbye, I must leave you. I am busy taking care of pork meat and
we shall eat sausages for your sake. Every one is well over there. Carlos
Grevemberg dined with us yesterday and promised me to send me news of Clouet
if he finds any when he reaches home. Don't neglect your studies for military
companies. We are dying to see you in your military uniform. One never hears
anything but companies and arms and war. I would like to live in another time
because anxiety torments me quite often. This cursed Lincoln, I would like to
see him with the Devil, yet, without harming him. What about your friend
Schaumburg? You don't say a word about him any more. Is he still with you or
did he go home or to war? I believe that the best for you at the present time is to
remain calmly at the University. Take your books instead of arms, as to you, it
is what I am ordering you to do whatever happens and if you leave Virginia it
should be to return straight to Louisiana with us. We have been all alone for
several days and we are bored to death. As a piece of news, I can tell you that
the Negroes broke into the refinery last night to steal some pork. I assure you
that Papa's return to the plantation is necessary. Goodbye, when I am writing
to you I cannot stop. Goodbye.

Your mother,

Louise Declouet

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