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PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet, Sr. in New Orleans,
to his son, Paul Declouet at Brookland School in Greenwood Depot, Virginia.
New Orleans, April 24, 1861

My dear son,

I left home on the 21st of this month and arrived here the day before yesterday. I shall leave for Montgomery, the day after tomorrow, on the 26. I left your mother (Louise Benoit Declouet) and sisters in good health but so sad about your departure and your absence at the present time when we are expecting the gravest and most disturbing news from Virginia! Your poor mother begged me with tears in her eyes to make you come back and it took all the courage I could muster to make her understand that duty and point of honor alone should make you decide about your conduct. Young men of your age owe themselves to the country. Before all, we owe our services to Louisiana, should it be in danger. But is it not also defending Louisiana when you fight for Virginia which is with us and seems to be the battlefield in a struggle whose end no one can foretell! Finally, my dear Paul, my heart and my mind are so full of different feelings and preoccupations that I am terribly puzzled about what advice or what instruction I should give you. Knowing that you joined a company that formerly offered its services to the Government of Virginia and having today a dispatch announcing that 300 University students left for Harper's Ferry I can only send you my fatherly blessing leaving to your discretion and to your judgement the best choice you can make. May honor and love of country be your only guides! If duty and danger are in Virginia, I know you well enough to figure that you will not abandon your post in such a time. On the other hand, if you learned that Louisiana was in danger (as appearances tell) I believe that

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the Virginian officials would be the first ones to send you back to help protecting your home. In any case, do your duty, come what may! I am feverishly impatient to hear from you. Write or telegraph me to Montgomery right away and if you decide to come back to Louisiana you could pass by here to discuss with me what is the best thing to do. I am not giving you any news. The telegraphed dispatches are so contradictory that you do not know what to believe. Defense preparations here are pushed on with energy. Two or three Companies from St. Mary and St. Martin have offered their services. Alc. DeBlanc is organizing one. Clouet (Alexander, your brother) enlisted in a Company with Charles Tertrou as Captain.

Goodbye, give me some news as soon as possible and whatever happens manage in your letters to reassure your poor mother who will die from worrying if she thinks that your life is in danger. Farewell, my dear son, I hug you and my impatience to hear from you makes me almost unhappy. Goodbye again before all do your duty to your country first, to your parents and family next. But do let me know soon from you.

Alexander Declouet

P. S. This letter may not be able to reach you at the University. If you have not left with your Company and if you can do so without appearing to abandon a position of duty and honor, come to Montgomery to join me. But, of course, decide by yourself in a situation where honor and duty must be the sole considerations.

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