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PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet in Montgomery,  
Alabama to his son, Paul Declouet in Virginia.

Montgomery, May 3, 1861

My dear Paul,

I received yesterday your message of the first announcing to me your return to the University. Not knowing from where you are coming I can only surmise that you followed your Company at Harper's Ferry. All right? I just wrote to you and expect any day a letter from you. But this is what is happening: having told my colleagues that you are in a Company whose services are perhaps accepted by the Government of Virginia and that probably you took part in an expedition at Harpers' Ferry or elsewhere, they thought I would be pleased if they took a step to obtain from President Davis for you a commission of lieutenant or second lieutenant in the army. This was done, so to speak, without consulting me and Mr. Perkins just now told me about it. Immediately, I made the observation that you had not received the military instruction necessary to be an officer, that I would like before hand to discuss this with you, consult each other, etc., etc. I am so new in such a business that caught unaware, I said neither yes no no, therefore, you are free to refuse or to accept after having seriously considered this and weighed both sides. I hardly feel I have the courage to take the responsibility to advise you in that matter. Take it into consideration with calm and without excitement and when you reach a decision, let me know about it right away and I shall tell you what I think. I would love to have you here but do not contemplate to leave Virginia before you hear from me. As I told you, there is a question to go from here to Richmond. Your poor mother (Louise Benoit Declouet) may write to you to come back, but

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(con't.)

do not weaken. We must wait for the events before deciding what is best for us to do. Keep me informed as much as you can about what is happening in Virginia which, I believe, will be the battlefield in the formidable struggle that Lincoln in the North rendered inevitable. For us, it is a question of life or death, it cannot be anything but a war of extermination. But enough. I just wrote rather at length to Clouet (Alexander, your brother) and I have to leave you. Embracing you with all the tenderness of a father and best friend,

Alexander Declouet