

1861

Aug. 29 PERSONAL LETTER from Louise Declouet in St. Martinville, to her husband, Alexandre Declouet in Richmond, Virginia.

St. Martinville, August 29, 1861

My dear Declouet,

I have so many things to tell you that I do not know myself where to start. However, the most important things come first and if I have time, the rest will come later. It is already getting late, the roads are frightful and it takes a whole hour to reach the village of St. Martinville. We have been having rain everyday for at least a month.

Yesterday, we buried dear little Marie St. Clair (Jean Baptiste Benoit, my brother, and Henriette LeBreton Benoit's daughter). You can imagine, dear friend, what is their sorrow and unhappiness. I have not seen them yet. We heard about this child's death practically before we knew she was ill. You know that she never felt very well especially since her teeth were coming, so I believe that they did not even realize the progress of her illness. She was still fat when she died according to what Messieurs Charles and Joachim told me. They slept here and left in the early morning because of the rain. I believe this little Marie had one or two little attacks at the moment of her death, so Lubin told me.

Aunt Tonton (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme) has not been here for a rather long time. Noemi (de l'Homme) is about to have her child; two of her children have fever. Our little Corinne (our daughter) is very well now and she kisses her dear Papa and her dear brother Paul. She is still pale but in good health. You will remember her dear little face when you see her little portrait which is at our good Mrs. Gay's home. Remember us to her and her family. As for myself, I lack words to thank her for all the kindnesses, affection and cares

1861 she had for my dear Paul. I recognize there the heart of a mother separated  
Aug. 29 from her child and making a voluntary sacrifice for such a cause. Your last long  
(con't.) letter to Clouet (Alexander, our son), received yesterday, brought my soul a  
little consolation but my dear Marie's death came right away to spoil it and plunge  
me back into the same sadness. The more time passes, the more sad and  
discouraged I feel. The thought of my dear Paul is with me day and night. I see  
him ceaselessly without being able to really see him. Embrace him for me a  
million times when you have the happiness to see him. I picture him all the time  
dying of hunger, of misery, of cold, of heat. You are telling me to delay taking  
a decision. I assure you that I would be at a loss to do so. You know that on  
this matter he always did about what he wanted and you did the rest. Everything  
you decide about him will be good for me. I cannot stand more worries, sorrows,  
torments than I have. This is what prevents me from writing to you. I leave  
this chore to the children.

Miss Laurent has occasional attacks of fever. This morning she is  
a little better after a night made sleepless by the quinine and valerian she took  
yesterday. Mr. Octave left us yesterday, going cheerful and contented to  
Virginia with three young acquaintances. They are on their way to the theater  
of the war. He wants to join my dear Paul's regiment. Clouet gave him some  
letters for you; another cause of tears for me to see him leaving. All of us were  
sorry to see him go. He is really a good young man. He promised to take care  
of my dear Paul and embrace him for me.

Old Bill is decidedly better. Mr. Mozart Briant died last night.  
Poor Mrs. Alcibiade! How sad and unhappy she must be because of that death.  
She has more sorrows than she should. He died in Mr. Alcibiade's home, will

1861 be buried at 4 o'clock.

Aug. 29  
(con't.)

This is a letter about death, chagrin and sadness from the beginning to the end. Separated from us as you are, you don't need this, yet, I cannot do otherwise.

3/14  
Laclaire's (Fuselier) son is taking Mr. Bazile away from us. He gives him \$30 a month, so he leaves us but still in a friendly way. Clouet gave him a note to be cashed in April 1862, as we could not pay him. Mr. Caillier is asking for \$40 a month for the grinding. Clouet says that at this price he will do without him and he has made his mind to give an overseer only \$23 a month, not more. He says that he will do without a supervisor and can do so very easily. I told you that your son is very active and takes care not to spend a cent unwisely. Give him your opinion about a supervisor for the grinding season. I find it hard for him to do without one, yet, it is according to his wishes.

Goodbye, I am sorry to leave you. Mr. Sabatier just came up and I want to join him and also Miss Laurent who is sending you her friendly greetings. All of us feel well and embrace you tenderly. Write often even if it is briefly. Kiss my dear Paul for all of us but especially for his dear and poor Mama. Give him everything you can, he must not lack anything. As for me, I am ready to deprive myself of everything in the world so that he would not be in want. If you return without him in September, you should leave Gaussy over there with him. It would be better than nothing at all, in case of illness, he might be useful. There are many soldiers who have servants. I don't see why he would not have any.

Goodbye, I am exhausted, I spent a sleepless night. Goodbye, I am your devoted friend,

L. Declouet



1861 P. S. Paul must need winter clothes. O Lord, when shall I be able to see him  
Aug. 29 and attend to his little affairs or wishes. I am afraid this time will never come,  
(con't.) my Lord!

Louison

P. S. I am afraid you will not be able to read this. Tear it off as soon as you  
decipher it.