

1861

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

Richmond, Saturday, September 28, 1861

My dear Paul,

I wrote to you from Jackson River and sent you in a letter of Charley Gay one from home of the 14th. I left Staunton (Virginia) on the 25th expecting to start for New Orleans yesterday, but the news received from Western Virginia and from Wise's command have induced me to wait a few days longer for more reliable information of the results of the battle which it is reported took place where I left you on Sewall Mountain on the 25th. Oh! how I regret having parted from you a few days only before the time when you were to be exposed to the casualties of a fight! I should not have done so and I now pay the penalty of our separation by the dread suspense and mortal anguish which fill my heart and absorb all my thoughts during the long hours of my prolonged sojourn here to await further news. If I could only know what has been your fate in that battle! Have you been spared to your poor father and mother (Marie Louise Benoit)? Have you been wounded or made prisoner? Where are you? What has become of you and your company? When shall I hear from you? - are questions which crowd upon me every minute of the day and night. I have been several times upon the point of returning to Lewisburg (West Virginia) and to the army but then the advantage of obtaining reliable and certain intelligence from the war department has determined me to remain here for a while or at least until I hear from you.

Since my arrival here I have been looking around to see what I could do for you and to my great mortification nothing satisfactory has presented itself. I could obtain a commission for you in the 10th La.

1861 (Marigny's) regiment but there are objections which are of sufficient weight
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(con't.) to make it advisable to be very cautious. I met here Maj. A. B. Walton of
the Washington Artillery. He is an old friend of mine and would be happy to
receive you in one of the companies of his battalion - which is one of the
finest corps in the Confederate Army! You would have to enter as a private
but should you determine to do so he has promised me to treat you as the son
of a valued friend and to afford you every fair opportunity of promotion and
advancement. As you are aware that battalion is now on the Potomac, and,
as it has been, will probably again be engaged in very brilliant service. I
know it to be composed mostly of young men of good standing and position.
You would be amongst Louisianians and I could more easily reach you and
hear from you and you from us! Take your time however before making up
your mind. I scarcely dare to advise you and I prefer that you should follow
the dictates of your own judgment. Should you conclude to join the Washington
Artillery, the modus operandi is I understand as follows; obtain the written
consent of your captain approved or endorsed by the colonel of your regiment;
address the same to Major Walton Washington Artillery Manassa - who will
then apply to the Secretary of War for your transfer. The order for which
would then be transmitted to you or to your commanding officers. The
enlistment of the Washington Artillery is for the war. I must say that I
would prefer a position in that corps to the one which you now occupy - but
still, my mind is full of doubt and uncertainty and I have an idea that I could
most probably do better for you in Louisiana! Would it not then be more
advisable to hold on a while to see what may turn up when I get to Louisiana?
Upon reflection however one does not preclude the other. If you wish to join

1861 the Washington Artillery and leave Western Virginia, you could do so and
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(con't.) should I find some suitable position for you in Louisiana you could still
await yourself of the choice. All promotions give a right to be transferred.
I have some hope also that the University Company will be disbanded or
transferred east. I have not been able to see the President, but Mr. Hunter
has promised me to interest himself in its behalf. Mr. Bledson gave me to
understand that it would be transferred east.

For God's sake let me if possible hear from you soon. I will not
leave for Louisiana untill I hear that you are comparatively in safety.
Address me care of Benjamin Farewell, my best wishes and cordial greetings
to your officers and comrades, and may God in his mercy bless and protect
you all!

Your affectionate father and best friend,

Alexander Declouet