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

Richmond November 30th, 1861

Saturday 9 P. M.

My dear Paul,

I arrived here day before yesterday evening and was very much disappointed to find no letter from you. I learned from Mr. Benjamin that the Wise Legion was still at Meadow Bluff and from the discouraging news from Western Va. which are published in the papers I have come to the conclusion that you will soon be ordered to move further East. I left home on the evening of the 21st inst. All the family was in good health but most painfully distressed by these oft repeated separations. I had to tear myself away. Your kind and affectionate mother (Marie Louise Benoit) only consolation when I leave home is derived from the knowledge that I will be nearer to you and that I may see you.

I left to Alex (your brother) and Blanche (your sister) the agreeable task of corresponding with you during the few weeks which I spent at home as you may imagine I was so very busy that days seemed to me as hours and weeks as days. I was so completely engaged with the sugar house that I did not go out at all and could scarcely attend to any thing else, although the cane was not very ripe I was succeeding pretty well and have over 300 Hogds. made when I left with about 450 arpents of my best cane to grind. If I lose no cane by a freeze my calculation is that I cannot fall short of making less than 800 Hogds. and probably more if the season continues favorable. Oh! how often I thought of you, of our camp life of our brave soldiers, of their hardships and privations when I found myself in the midst of such an

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abundance of sweet things. Sugar at the rate of 12 to 15 hogds a day and molasses in overflowing quantities almost as plentiful as water! and to think that by the want of transportation we are compelled almost to give away at home that which here and throughout our armies would be considered so great a luxury. But enough of this!

I could write without end about your beloved mother and dear sisters, Clouet (Alexander, your brother) and all our fond and affectionate relatives. Our dear little Corinne (your sister) is the light and joy of the house. She has become almost too smart and knowing - and in our admiring fondness you were never forgotten! But enough of this also! I should not recall and uphold to your imagination these endearing pictures of our sweet home! Such blissful visions should be banished from a soldier's tent and from a father's letter! but they have flowed almost unconsciously from my heart to my pen and I hope that your fortitude will not be shaken by my weakness.

I am occupying my same room at Mr. Benjamin's and I dined yesterday at Mr. Macfarland,, who together with his kind lady inquired about you with much friendly interest. I regret that you have not written to them. Being in the neighbourhood of I supposed that you would have had some means of communicating with me. Dassonville who could have probably supplied you with some of the many good things of that abundant farm (for money if not for love).

In your letter to Clouet (your brother) which was received a few days before I left home I saw with pain that your company was reduced to 13 or 14 fit for duty! This melancholy fort very naturally increases my

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anxiety for you! Then too the death of poor Harmon Dinwiddie! I sympathize from the bottom of my heart with his brothers and with his family! Can you stand it much longer without being taken sick too? Can you not obtain a furlough to come and spend a week or two with me here? Considering the length of time you have been in the service and the hardships of the severe campaign you have gone through it seems to me that a favour of the sort could almost be claimed as a right! Benjamin has intimated to me something of a very promising nature in that respect, but I have not yet been able to get from him a full explanation of what he meant. I may do so before I close this letter which I will mail only tomorrow or on Monday.

Good night. I go to my good soft bed with a sad heart and would be much more happy to share your soldiers couch on the hard ground. Adieu (until tomorrow), God bless you!

Dec. 1st, 1861 - After a sleepless night of agitation I rise to the enjoyment of a bright cold morning and to the cheering intelligence communicated to me by Benjamin at breakfast that an express bearer is about to be sent with orders to the Wise Legion to come to Richmond! Benjamin thinks that his orders will reach Meadow Bluff ahead of any letters by mail and I therefore enclose this letter to our worthy friend Mr. Gay with instructions to hold on to it till your arrival in Staunton (Virginia). What will be the final disposition made by the War Department of the Wise Legion I have not been able to ascertain as I did not like to question the Secretary of War beyond the limits of a reserved discretion, but my impression is that as far as you are concerned that I may succeed in obtaining (if not your discharge) at least your transfer to Louisiana! Let not however our expectations run too high for fear

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of disappointment. Congress will probably adjourn next month and we may perhaps nourish the gratifying hope of returning home together! My heart swells at the idea! Oh! how I long to hear from you - as the term of deliverance approaches the dread apprehension of some unforeseen and untoward obstacles increases in proportion. But no! We must have faith in the merciful designs of a kind Providence! I found on my arrival here a letter for you from Schaumberg which I know you will be very happy to get as soon as possible and therefore send it herewith.

I have brought on for you some warm clothes, flannel shirts and drawers and some other little things but I think best to hold on to them here to await your arrival. I suppose that you have had enough money to reach Staunton (and even Richmond). If not you can borrow from Mr. Gay any amount which you may stand in need of and I will make him the remittance immediately.

I left Gussy's children all in good health and I hope that he is himself doing well. I will be very glad to see him. Should you be able to do so conveniently I think that it would be well for you to bring on with you to Richmond all of your effects, clothes both at Charlottesville as well as at Staunton. Reduce them to as small a compass as possible. Coming on I passed through East Tennessee and it is a hard road to travel. My most friendly regards to Capt. Crane, to your officers and comrades and with the hope of having soon the pleasure of seeing them and you. I remain your affectionate father,

Alexander DeClouet

P. S. Should this letter reach you at Meadow Bluff, try and obtain the

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permission to come on a head of the Wise Legion. I understand that no stages are running and it will be a long and arduous march to Larkson River. The Wise Legion is certainly ordered to Richmond but let that be between us should the order have not yet reached your camp.

A. Declouet