

1864

Feb. 12\*

PERSONAL LETTER from Alexander Declouet, Sr. in St. Martinville, to his sons, Alexander and Paul Declouet in Cornay's Battery in Alexandria, La. followed by a letter to his aunt, Josephine Declouet de l'Homme.

St. Martinville, February 12, 1864\*

My dear sons,

Your two letters reached us through Ad. Mouton. The first one was received only a long time after the second. We were sad to see that Clouet (Alexander) is a little depressed and I want to believe that he will get over this feeling of melancholy and homesickness which cannot fail to render him unhappy. One must be so grateful to fulfill with conscience one's duties as a patriotic soldier that it is better to accept the situation cheerfully and with courage. When I see all these little officers wandering around in any street to show off their ranks and strutting along with all their uselessness and silly vanity, I rejoice and am proud of the life of sacrifice and deprivation you have taken upon yourselves. Therefore, courage, my dear children, our greatest consolation in seeing you away from your father's home is to know that you are in good health and in good spirit. My dear Clouet is wrong to give up so easily when he does not succeed immediately to obtain what he wants. On the contrary, you must persist and insist stubbornly especially when the request is fair and sensible. I would have been very happy to learn that he had been successful in obtaining a furlough to go to Shreveport in order to see this worthy Mrs. Franbourg to whom I have pledged my respect and gratitude. I do not know if I will ever be able to express to her and give her proofs of our sincere and profound gratefulness. When you speak to her or to her son do not forget to say that I am at her disposal if I could be useful to her in any manner and finally that I would be happy to have her stay in our home if she ever decided to visit our section of the State.

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V. Roman and Christine (your sister) sent you a little message through Mr. Rene Delatre and the former is announcing to you the sending of a carload of food which will leave tomorrow (Saturday) from Tonton's (Josephine Declouet de l'Homme, your great-aunt) escorted by Cousin. I hope that either he or you will find a good chance to send the cart back with some one you can trust, otherwise, (Louis Erasmi) Nee promised me to furnish him with a regular pass from the Provost Marshall. We have somewhere else a note about the objects that we are sending you and I will take care of this at Tonton's where I am going this afternoon in order to see Nee before his departure.

I have few details to give you about what is happening here. I would be satisfied with our situation on the plantation if we could be sure this condition will last. Well, you should always do your duty. My little work keeps me very busy and I do it with as much ambition and zeal I had when I started working. The chestnut trees are all right; I renewed a good many fences, ploughed (with 7 ploughs, 4 being handled by men, three by mules) 60 arpents, cleaned ditches and planted potatoes. Within a few days, I shall sow corn. I brought all the animals together in the big enclosed lot facing the house and they are in good condition. There are fine colts in the manade and I have three beautiful American fillies and two colts left. The other, also Lisa and another mare perished in the woods. There remain three or four horses dead in the woods and five or six here. Betsy is noticeably pregnant - I ride her constantly.

Uncle Laclair (Fuselier) still has his headquarters here where he goes and comes to run errands everywhere. He left this morning to go as far as Mrs. Carlo's where he hopes to meet our aunt Iphigenie (?) whose arrival I learned in Franklin a few days ago. Claire (Benoit Nee) wrote to him

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lately a long and very interesting letter, she came twice to Franklin but returned to town where business may keep her two or three weeks. According to the short and vague reports from Franklin, the Federals do not seem ready to evacuate it soon. Occasionally, they make raids on Cypress mort, Jeannerette and up to New Iberia. The second of the Louisiana (Company) a few days ago was between St. Martinville and New Iberia (on St. Denis's property and I believe is still there). I am quite upset because you have not received our letters included in the General's envelope, furthermore, I had written to our good cousin to whom I would like to write now but I am in a hurry and it will be for another time. In the meantime, I shall add a few lines to dear Tonton:

Saturday, February 13, 1864

Dear Tonton,

I came here yesterday afternoon with Jeanne, Blanche (my daughter) and Cleo and I found Tonton busy packing all sorts of good things. From home, we are sending you a keg of sugar, another one of boiled molasses, a box of red beans and one of small white beans, containing also oranges, pralines and a marzipan made by Jeanne and Blanche. Also in a basket you will find smoked meat you should hang up so it will not spoil. The basket also contains sausages, tongues, etc. Remember me to your old good friends and to Georges Michel and Louis Fortier to whom you will give, as coming from me, what you judge proper, that is to say sugar, molasses, etc. and also to Cousin. The candles and little cakes come from Tonton's. Besides, there are two cans of lard. There is a box with a red mark which should be opened because of the oranges. Mr. John is sending a case to Thomas. E. Broussard may have left a mule at



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Mrs. Brown's. If so, Furr could bring me back.

Goodbye, I lack time. We are enjoying ahead of time the idea of the good fare you will have at least for some time. Charles de l'Homme, still suffering, asked me to offer his friendly regards. We embrace you tenderly.

Your father and friend,

Alexander Declouet

P. S. Friendly greetings to Captain Cornay, go to see the General once in a while and tell him that I wrote to him.

\*NOTE: The first letter is dated April 12, 1864 but he refers to the next day as being Saturday and April 13, 1864 did not fall on a Saturday. Since the second letter is dated February 13, 1864, which is a Saturday, we can assume the first letter should be dated February 12, 1864.

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