

1876
July 19

PERSONAL LETTER from Jane Roman Declouet in Galveston, Texas,
to her husband, Paul L. Declouet in St. Martinville.

Galveston, July 19, 1876

My dear Paul,

After two baths, it is time for me to talk to you about this. Let us start with the costumes, pants of gray flannel made by Blanche (your sister), and Edwige's (Lauve) robe with black and white squares. I could not decide to wear a tunic falling below the knees. Nemours (Lauve) warned us so much not to have too light a material that I found a marvelous buy. I bought Edwige (Lauve) some pants like mine and a robe in gray cashmere. That was for the first bath we took yesterday evening about 7 o'clock, I think. On the beach, we met Mr. Broussard and his family. Mr. Broussard accompanied me in the water holding both of my hands. I did not have the least fear, the gulf was very calm. The bathers complained about that. The water was just as it should be and I felt no fatigue afterwards. I remained there only about five minutes according to my old companion's advice. Charley (our son) was with us and like a veteran, he jumped with the old man's little girls. He even let a little wave pass over his head. It was a pleasure to see him so happy. As his costume was not finished, we put on him an old grey pair of pants with red stripes and a printed cotton blouse. The little girls and Blanche did not have their costumes either. The merchant had made us wait a whole day for the flannel we had bought - 24 yards for \$4.00 but at least they (the little girls) witnessed our attempt.

In the cabin, there are two sides, one for gentlemen, one for the ladies, consequently two padlocks and both keys being similar, we had one. We found that our debut was quite successful. Therefore, we went back this morning and Blanche followed us into the water. No need to say that she found the water a

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little cold. She wore Louise Broussard's costume that the mother had brought to her. The little girls remained close to the cabin with Ernestine and Charley with us. Imagine my old bathing companion's kindness. He was finishing bathing when we arrived and he returned to hold my hand. Nemours is as busy as can be with his baby. Yesterday, she screamed but today she was used to it. Nemours had us have lunch at Leduc's, a sort of a restaurant on the beach: a court-bouillon, a cup of coffee with condensed milk for \$7.30. Isn't that cheap?

To go to each bath and come back, we pay \$1.50. On account of this, I asked Nemours if it would not be possible to rent any kind of carriage to come for us at a definite time. He got the information: it would be \$90 a month for a hack and \$125 for a bus, but he found something better than all that - his baker offered free his delivery carriage and a coachman every morning at five o'clock if we were not too proud to accept. As you think, the deal is on. The coachman has been recommended to us and when we go after dinner, we take two cars. This is why it is so expensive. Today, all day, we have been sewing costumes. Blanche's one is finished and also Charley's and Ernestine's. This evening, Edwige (our daughter) and I and Charley, and Ernestine, who carried our basket, went to bathe, but there was lightening and I was afraid to take a chance, especially as my old comrade did not advise me to go. All the ladies said the opposite but I preferred to come back before the rain which is falling now. Vigette (Edwige, our daughter) caught a little cold and she is waiting for her costume with impatience. Lizzie (Lizima, our daughter) enjoys being spoilt and Charley is splendid. It is late. I kiss you with all my love, the children also.

Monday, July 20 - We are back for the bath. Nemours, Blanche, Charley

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and Ernestine went in the cart for the bread driven by the owner himself. It is exactly what we need. We go informally, without bothering about hats. The man (the driver) is rich and is a former acquaintance of the Lauve's. We had left the little girls asleep with Naine Vige (Edwige Lauve) who had her foot pricked with a needle. The bath was delightful and the waves stronger. One cannot desire anything better as a bath and we regret that you do not enjoy this.

Goodbye, dear friend, no small talk today. The main thoughts have been said and will interest you more.

Blanche loves the baths. She and all of us kiss you.

Yours forever,

Jane