

Besides the home near Lauzun a large estate was left to the family by the decease of an elder brother in the Isle of Bourbon, or as it is sometimes called, the Isle of France. Joseph Alexander was commissioned by the heirs to settle the estate, and accordingly made his plans for a voyage to the Indian Ocean. France had no ships trading there. She was at war with England, so that no Frenchman could go in an English vessel. The only course was to come to America and sail from one of her ports. He landed in New York in October, 1803. But at this time the English were making those reprisals on our commerce which led to the War of 1812, and our neutral vessels refused to take a French subject on board, because it would not be safe if the English cruisers in their search for contraband articles should find him. After much delay he sent his papers, but they were returned to be translated into English, as the Isle of France had come into their possession and everything must be done in English. He had them translated and sent to Mr. Pepon, the agent of his brother's estate, from whom he received a small sum of money. Nothing further came of it. He was told by Mr. Pepon that so many governmental changes had taken place in the island that affairs were greatly embarrassed and the claims were of little value, and the whole business was disposed of without his receiving any particular account of it. So ended his dream. But the expectation of the inheritance kept him from seeking to make a fortune in this country. But in the meantime he supported himself by practicing the craft he had learned in Germany, and he was one of the earliest manufacturers here of wind instruments made of wood. For a long time he felt sure that the French government would make amends for the loss he sustained, and this hope was fed from time to time by promises made by the French Ambassador.

One of his friends in New York was a Mr. Boyer, a Frenchman who had married an American wife. In their family was a young cousin named Elizabeth Alcott, about twenty years old. She was born in New Haven, Conn., Nov. 30, 1785, and at ten years of age removed with her parents to Athens, N. Y., on the Hudson. From this place she went to New York City to make her fortune. She found it in M. de Peloubet, who became acquainted with her at the home of Mr. Boyer. He could never speak much English, and she knew next to nothing of French.