

A.W.T. PAPERS 16 Nov-Dec 1878

128 George St.

Providence R.I.

Nov. 16. 1878

Hon. A. W. Tourgee,

Near Classmate:

I have lately read
"Yonette" with peculiar interest, that
is, with ~~aroused~~ conscience aroused
against the sins of your neighbors by the
evidently honest purpose of the
book. In fact you have so enlisted
all our moral forces and so put
down our baser instincts that
it was a little unkind in you
to leave any uncertainty over the
final condition of your heroine.

To save up both her and us to
virtuous feelings, so high only to
let her submit at last to the
lustful and ungrateful passions of
a blind Scoundrel, would be to

Teach a lesson of moral despair.
I think a true tragedy must
always in some way give virtue
due honor, and make all specta-
tors feel that moral good is
compensation for all ~~the~~ sorts
of disasters. A contrary Cata-
strophe might be conformable to
the degraded sentiments left in
the South by Slavery and would
be far from commonplace in
literature, but these advantages
would be won at cost of moral
offence and no doubt also to
the sale of the book.

Now I for one believe that
in your poetical and touching

close you meant us to
understand that old prejudices
had been killed by grief and
abandoned with old scenes
and old names. Why else you
bade a formal adieu to the South
and left your characters in
the vicinity of Boston I cannot
conjecture. Misbehavior thereabout
would be more execrated & in
such a character as Louette
more inartistic, than her
marriage with Hunter would
have been in North Carolina.
You could not, and did not,
consent that Louette, grown
noble with freedom, should be
debauched as if she were forever

essentially a slave. And if my interpretation is correct, — surely no other is on any account admissible, — I hope a future edition may see the light and give us a little clearer glimpses through the veil that hangs with a reserve so graceful over the final scene.

"Prey" Anderson has told me of your heroic life. You left college at a great crisis and the strain I should think has been pretty constant to this day. I hope the whirligig of politics & returning good sense may advance you to due honors. Meanwhile I hope you have pleasant recollections of your friends in the old quiet college days.

Yours very truly
Ed. Johnson