

THE AUTHOR OF "METZEROTT, SHOEMAKER."

WHO wrote "Metzerott"? was the question discussed at every afternoon tea-drinking in Baltimore last winter after Prof. Richard T. Ely, of the Johns Hopkins University, had piqued public curiosity by announcing that the author of this much-talked-of book was a Baltimore woman. Immediately every girl who had wielded a pen became the possible heroine of the hour, from the maiden who indited lines to "The Beautiful Spring" to the professional society gossip whose most brilliant literary effort had been the description of Mrs. Toplofty's latest gown: all shared alike the honor of being accredited with the authorship of the famous book of the season.

While society was thus exemplifying its lack of perception, and the daily papers were printing lists of names any one of which might belong to the "great unknown," the latter was far from the halls of pleasure, living her creed of Christian socialism among the working-women of her city, dividing her time and energies with those whose condition in life she would better, while the petted belles of the Monumental City were dividing her honors among themselves.

But Katharine Pearson Woods cared little for the world's applause; for just when success crowned her work, and hero-worshippers were making pilgrimages to see the hero, she cast her lot with the Knights of Labor, dedicating her talents to the emancipation of the working-classes and to exposing the degrading condition of city factories.

She is a thorough convert to Mr. Bellamy's theories as set forth in "Looking Backward." Indeed, the influence of this ideal twentieth century upon Miss Woods resulted in the production of "Metzerott, Shoemaker," which Mr. Bellamy in turn recommends to the Nationalist party as a clever exponent of his views.

It was through a letter of his to Prof. Ely eulogizing "Metzerott, Shoemaker," that the identity of the author became known; for Prof. Ely, with the best interest of the modest young author at heart, entertaining for her the warmest and most sincere friendship, gave the name of Katharine Pearson Woods, with Mr. Bellamy's letter, to the Baltimore *Sun* for publication.

This announcement caused not a little excitement in our midst. A general falling of feathers occurred among those who had been disporting themselves in borrowed plumes, while intellectual circles hastened to seek fellowship with the new light.

Miss Woods, however, with the characteristic modesty which prompted her to publish anonymously her powerful book, would not allow herself to be lionized, and declined social invitations, to become an active member of the Nationalist Club. The Economic Club, of which she was the organizer, also claims much of her time and interest. This association is largely composed of Johns Hopkins University men, and not a few progressive women, who feel it their privilege and pleasure to keep in touch with the times. Here political economy

is discussed in the most parliamentary fashion. Not long since, Miss Woods took an active part in the debate on "the advisability of the government controlling natural monopolies." She is now preparing a paper on labor organizations from a Nationalist stand-point, to be read before the Nationalist Club.

The author of "Metzerott, Shoemaker" has no appearance of the revolutionist. She is of medium height, with a delicate *spirituelle* face of rare sweetness of expression. Her forehead is massive and intellectual, while her luminous gray eyes burn with the latent fire of genius. She is, however, "but yet a woman," for a curled bang of soft brown hair falls lightly, almost flippantly, over that same intellectual brow. She dresses quietly and is simple in her tastes, never indulging in extravagances.

But let us see what influences of ancestry and consanguinity tended to the development of so striking a character as that of our pioneer woman Socialist, Nationalist, and Knight of Labor.

Miss Woods comes of good old pioneer West Virginia stock on the paternal side, men who for generations were surveyors and civil engineers, from whom she inherits her broad and analytical mind. From her maternal ancestors, the McCabes, she gets her marked literary ability.

Her great-great-grandfather, James McCabe, was one of General -Montgomery's staff-officers during the French and Indian War. He was wounded at the battle of Quebec in 1759. When the American Revolution broke out, he raised and equipped a regiment at his own expense and fought on the Continental side. This large demand upon his resources bankrupted his estate, and he was compelled to sacrifice everything, including even his baby's cradle, which he declined to withhold, preferring to cut down a tree and model it into a couch for his offspring rather than deprive others of their rights.

Miss Woods's grandfather, Rev. James Dabney McCabe, was one of the most gifted members of the Virginia and Maryland diocese in his day. Although born in Wheeling, West Virginia, the author of "Metzerott, Shoemaker" passed most of her childhood in the quaint old rectory of St. James's Church on West River, Anne Arundel County, Maryland, becoming a member of her grandfather's household upon the death of her father, which occurred in Baltimore when she was but nine years of age.

Just at this time an uncle and a great-aunt who had run the blockade with their families arrived at the old parish house, bringing together under one roof eight juvenile cousins; decidedly a socialistic environment for the young genius. But the little Katharine had not yet learned the beauty of dividing her pleasures with others, much preferring solitary walks through the quiet woods to romping with the noisy brood of cousins, none of whom sympathized with her moods.

The great gloomy garret was another favorite haunt of the dreamy child. Here she would revel in the treasures of her grandfather's library, many of which had made their way up there from the overcrowded shelves of his study.

At the age of ten years this serious little girl devoured Neale's

"Tales of the Early Church," while sitting under the dusty eaves of the attic; and whenever allowed within the sacred precincts of the study, "Pearson on the Creed" or "Lardner's Lectures on Astronomy" was sure to claim her youthful attention, each volume being as large as herself.

Wishing to secure greater educational advantages for her children, Mrs. Woods returned to Baltimore when the author of "Metzerott" was fourteen years old. Here she soon gave the first evidence of an inherited literary tendency by competing for the prize offered by *The Young Idea*, a little paper edited and published by two choristers of St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal Church. The prize was for the best poem contributed to their columns within a certain time. Katharine submitted her first youthful effusion. Success met her on the very threshold of her career, and she won the coveted prize, which proved to be an engraving, cut from *Godey's Lady's Book*, of Shakespeare at the Court of Queen Elizabeth!

At the age of seventeen Miss Woods was entered at the then fashionable seminary conducted by Mrs. Converse and Miss Miller, the latter a former pupil of Harriet Beecher Stowe. She had hitherto never attended any school, her education having been entirely under the careful direction of her accomplished mother, who preferred keeping her delicate child with her. The arrival of the All Saints' Sisters from England, in 1872, materially affected Miss Woods's destiny. This Order began its work at Mount Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church in Baltimore, of which she was an active member.

Becoming deeply absorbed in the mission-work, she determined to devote her life to it; and with that object in view she entered the sisterhood as a postulant, in 1874, but remained only six months, on account of failing health, the Superior and her physician advising her to return to the world.

Those six months of self-denial left their lasting impress upon a character already keenly alive to the needs of suffering humanity. They did more: they helped to develop the latent spirit of Christian Socialism which is so essentially a part of Miss Woods's nature. A rule of the convent was that the postulant must eat all set before her. Many times this proved a difficult task, and she who had far more than her needs required felt an unexpressed longing to divide with those who had none,—the hundreds of wretches who were starving for bread. No environment could have been more conducive to the production of a Christian Socialist; and so it happened that the germ of this new religion, the "Universal Brotherhood," took root in the convent.

When it became necessary for Miss Woods to give up the religious life, she at once decided to substitute literature for the cloister.

In 1876 she began teaching school at Mount Washington, Maryland, but afterwards resigned to accept a position in a school at Wheeling, West Virginia.

In 1884 the *Chicago Tribune* published a series of prize stories. It was about this time that the great two years' strike occurred in Wheeling; and Miss Woods, who was much interested in the condition of affairs, wrote two stories about the lives of the nail-operatives there.

Both won prizes, as did also a third, which was a love-story. Thus encouraged, she was more than ever anxious to adopt authorship as a profession. She immediately took up the study of sociology, spending much time among the German population in Wheeling, where, it will be remembered, the opening scene in "Metzerott, Shoemaker" is laid.

Miss Woods had given up teaching several years before she began her book.

She took no one into her confidence when she first began to write. Her mother and sisters had no suspicion of her secret, unless they drew their own conclusions upon occasionally discovering the amiable Katharine seated at her desk with "her head so full of big knowledges that she couldn't speak a pleasant word to anybody."

Her desk was, by the way, presented to the author of "Metzerott" by a friend many years ago, with the admonition to "write something great here." The request has proved to be a prophecy.

Miss Woods decided quite accidentally upon the name of her book. While riding through Washington, the name of Metzerott in large letters on a sign attracted her attention just when she was casting about in her mind for a good title. This struck her fancy, and, with the suffix "Shoemaker," was at once adopted. An amusing coincidence is that she kept her manuscript in a *shoe*-box, without discovering the fact until the story was completed.

Miss Woods is a most valuable member of The Woman's Literary Club of Baltimore, of which Mrs. Frances Litchfield Turnbull is president.

She is a very facile writer. "Metzerott, Shoemaker" was begun in December, 1888, and finished in July, 1889. Within the year she has also written "The Mark of the Beast," which appears in this number of the magazine, and almost completed another novel, "A Web of Gold," which will soon go to press.

In addition to this, she has edited the Woman's Column in the Baltimore *Critic*, and contributed special articles to *The Christian Union* and other journals.

Baltimore is justly proud of her gifted daughter, whose fame is fast spreading abroad, and whose fine and earnest work marks a new period in American fiction.

Hester Crawford Dorsey.

OUTCAST.

WOMAN and man, cast out
From the garden of the Lord,—
Before them, danger and doubt,
Behind them, the flaming sword,—

Gaze in each other's eyes :

Lo ! what outweighs the ban ?—

"We have hope," the woman cries,

"We have love," the word of the man.

Solomon Solis-Cohen.