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As one who is generally wary of abridged material it was with some trepidation that I approached this volume. The title and presentation give a clear indication of the intention of the publisher to popularise this and other MacDonald novels.¹

The introduction sets out the intentions of the editor admirably. It is with the best and most positive reasons that he undertakes the task and his integrity cannot be questioned. The opening chapters present the important facts, though with some loss to the richness of the narrative. This flattening effect is no doubt the major difficulty in abridging another writer's work, and does tend to encourage boredom, lacking as it does the infusion of life to fill out the information necessary to the unfolding story.

The most regrettable loss is the absence of MacDonald's short qualifying remarks on people or situations, which are often so full of a significance discovered later in the story, and which serve to lift a seemingly commonplace statement into a different sphere. This was one of MacDonald's main concerns, and something that made his work distinctive.

The most obvious change is the lack of Scottish dialect, which, though obviously a loss to the portrayal of characters, can only be helpful to the modern non-Scottish reader for whom the book is intended. The change in name from Janet (David Elginbrod's wife and Margaret's mother) to Jeanette is, in my opinion, unnecessary and inappropriate.

Though I started from a rather biased anti-abridgement standpoint this, and potentially its fellow volumes will no doubt achieve their object of gaining a much wider **[end of page 41]** readership for MacDonald than may otherwise have been possible. One would however hope that the introduction may lead some readers back to the original text.

Endnote

1. *The Fisherman's Lady; The Marquis' Secret; The Baronet's Song; The Shepherd's Castle; The Musician's Quest*. **[42]**