

## THE FOAM-FOOT STAR-SPARKLING.

"Mistress of Mistresses." By E. R. Eddison. (Faber and Faber. 10s. 6d. net.)

(BY HUMBERT WOLFE.)

This is the second time that Mr. Eddison has invented a world and has spoken its strange inaccessible language. The first was the planet of the Worm Ouroboros, and there are still astronomers who note the occasions of that strange star's transit. Now he comes by way of Iceland and the hard-knocking saga to the strangest unspeakable life after death and death after life in Zimiamvia.

First let it be admitted that to like—no, to understand—the book is an act of faith no easier than the acceptance of Einstein's theories. The mind must unhinge, swing itself the myriadth of a millimetre from the true, and then with the snapping of a harpstring it is in a world not of the fourth dimension, but a world beyond dimensions. It is a world where language pursues, and is drowned in, impossible starlight, where phrases are bee-carried to unbelieved asphodel hot with honey, and where all meaning is at the sovereign mercy of—

the foam-foot  
star-sparkling Aphrodite.

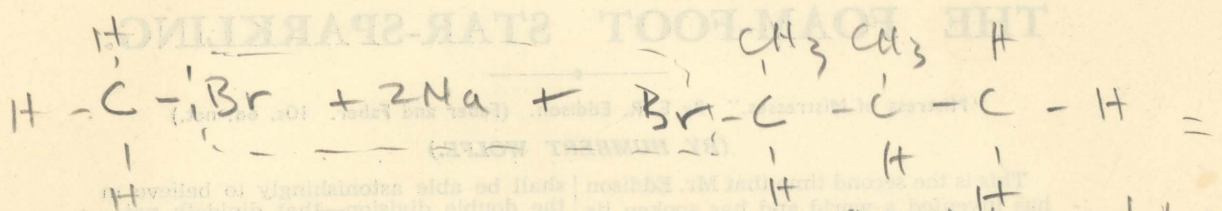
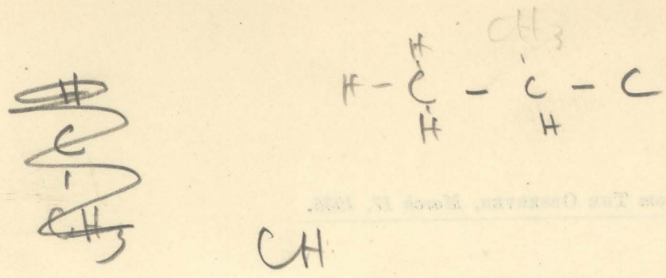
So much—and it is much indeed—must be taken for granted if the book is not to be dismissed as the freak of a man in love with half-a-dozen dictionaries. Elizabethan English, Latin, the Langue d'Oc, and that other liliated tongue where the light wave lisps Greece. So much must be, and so far as one reader at least is concerned will be taken for granted. Instead, therefore, of being puzzled by the arabesques and the peacockings of fantasy and phrase we will submit to the convention. We will stand by the side of that Senorita, watcher of great Lessingham's bier—that lady whose names in Zimiamvia are Fiorinda and Antiope, and whose other names are the Cyprian, Ash-taroth, Aphrodite risen from the sea. We

shall be able astonishingly to believe in the double division—that divideth not—of the dead Lessingham into Lord Lessingham, Captain-General under that Vicar of the ~~High~~ Queen, Horius Parry, a gorilla in power, shape, and sudden furry reach of the arms, and into Duke Barganax, whose painter's brush was dipped in the colours beyond time. We shall accept this division and the division of these two lovers of the One in Many as we accept their division into the forms of Fiorinda and Antiope.

Si j'avoie ameit un jor  
je diroie a tous;  
bones sont amors.

"Bones sont amors" in Zimiamvia, and bright are battles in the high mountain-passes in the lost kingdom of Fingiswold. What names to fight and sing and die for—Rerek, the March of Ulba, Meszfa, and all those cold hills by Swaleback. Or, if your wish be for the softer gardens and the plain—then is there Zayana, where flowers are as winged as birds, and birds but flowers on wings.

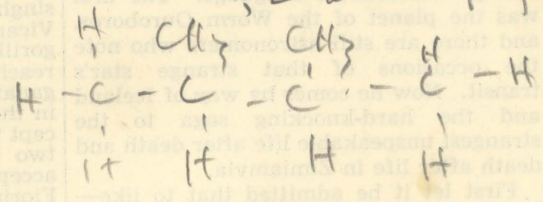
Nor need we attempt the dream-plots and counterplots, the wise counsels of old Vandermast, a Merlin wakened from Vivien's enchantment of the leaves, the doubts and shifts of the High Admiral and the Chancellor. All these have no meaning or a treble meaning according as you accept or reject the domination of the Senorita. Yield to that and you will find expressed for you in her own syllables boyhood's dream of adventure, youth's lassitude, man's craving for war and love and death. A huge blown tapestry it is, or a bubble in the sun's eye—crazily rising, dipping, and so out with lights beyond the many-coloured dome. All this—or, if you cannot accept, mere words, like a huge tossed mound of coloured beads. Let the reader choose for himself. It will be observed that the critic has already chosen.



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