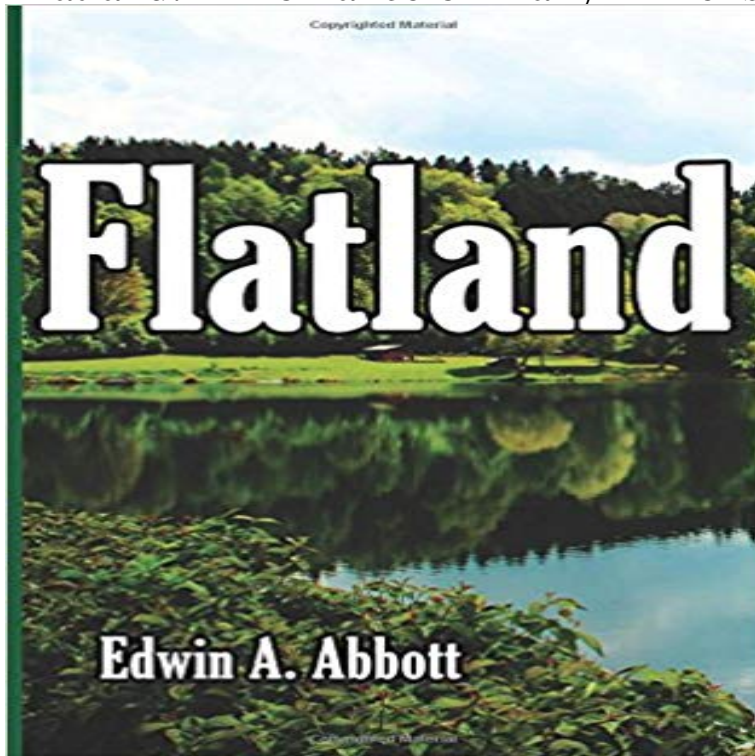


Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions



When you read this book, keep two things in mind. First, it was written back in 1880, when relativity had not yet been invented, when quantum theory was not yet discovered, when only a handful of mathematicians had the courage (yet) to challenge Euclid and imagine curved space geometries and geometries with infinite dimensionality. As such, it is an absolutely brilliant work of speculative mathematics deftly hidden in a peculiar but strangely amusing social satire. Second, its point, even about itself, is still as apropos today as it was then. We still do not really know what the true dimensionality of the Universe is. It seems somehow unlikely that it is just four, even in terms of spacetime dimensions. String theory talks seriously about thousands of dimensions. Quantum theory implements very seriously infinite numbers of dimensions. And yet we are still stuck in our 3 space dimensions mentally, hardly able to visualize the 4 in which we live properly unless we study theoretical physics for a decade or three, and utterly unable to mentally imagine those four embedded in a veritable Hilberts Grand Hotel of dimensions. Ultimately, this is a book about keeping an open mind. A really open mind -- avoiding the trap of scientific materialism and the trap of theistic idealism and the trap of any other favorite -ism you might come up with. Our entire visible space-time continuum could be nothing more than a single thin page in an infinitely thick book of similar pages, that book one of an infinite number of similar books on an infinite shelf, that shelf but one such shelf in an infinite bookcase of shelves, that bookcase but one in an infinite library of bookcases, that library but one... but by now you get the idea. We have a hard time opening our minds up to the enormous range of possibilities, preferring to live our lives mentally trapped in a single tiny period on just one of those pages, in pointland. We may be quite

unable to actually perceive the space in which our tiny point is embedded, but our minds are capable of conceiving it, and Abbots lovely parable is a mind-expanding work to those who choose to read it that way.

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