

CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE HISTORY OF
DETERMINANTS

1900-1920

BY

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PREFACE

The first instalment (Vol. I, Part 1) of the four-volume *History of Determinants* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd.) was published in 1890, and in the Preface (pp. v-vii) and Introduction (pp. 3-5) are explained the circumstances which led to it being undertaken and the objects which it sought to attain. Two years afterwards I was induced by Mr. Cecil Rhodes to go out to South Africa to take in hand the organization of Public Education at the Cape; and for a lengthened period this new undertaking was found to be so absorbing that the historical part of my research work had to go to the wall. Strange to say, it was only resumed when the official worries of war-time (1899-1902) made some such mental relief-work a necessity. Progress, however, was now very slow, reference-libraries, for one thing, being 6000 miles away. It thus came about that five years were covered in the preparation of Part 2 of Vol. I, which saw the light in 1906 along with a second edition of Part 1.*

Then followed another series of lean years, the reason being as before. Indeed, so uphill was the struggle that, with the publication of Vol. II in 1911, carrying the record on to 1860, it seemed as if all hope of finishing the work would have to be abandoned. A complete change, however, came about in 1915 with my retirement from the Cape Education Department, and the consequent attainment of freedom to resume the old work in earnest. As a result Vol. III, dealing with the period 1860-1880, was published in 1920 and Vol. IV in 1923, the record of discovery being thus brought down to the end of the nineteenth century in accordance with the plan resolved on forty-two years before.

* See Introduction (pp. 1-5) to this edition.

Of course interest in the subject could not end abruptly with the completion of a set task or the fulfilment of a contract, and so the work of investigation went on without break into the writings of the new century. In a sense the material was ready to hand, as my bibliographical lists had been continued to date: indeed, the eighth, giving the titles up to 1923, had just been published. Fortunately, too, many of the various natural divisions of the subject can be effectively studied without much regard to the rest: and consequently their records can, without appreciable loss, be got ready for publication separately. As a consequence, there have already appeared in the serial publications of Societies, eleven such divisions, the special determinants so dealt with being as a rule those most suitable for such treatment. A list of them will be found below (p. xxiv).

The remaining sections, nearly equal in number and extent, being of more general interest, it was thought better to embody them from the first in book form, and hence the present volume. The only departure from strict adherence to the original scheme consists in using a second time the chapters on Alternants and Compounds. For this accession of strength the volume is indebted to the Council of the R.S.E.

The course thus taken gives me a very welcome opportunity of rendering a service to fellow-workers, who may not be specialists in the study of determinants, by providing as an appendix a Subject-Index of all the historical writings whose story has just been told. Such an Index, I have reason to know, has been a real and growing want since 1924. I have to thank my publishers, Macmillan & Co., Ltd. and Blackie & Son, Ltd., for falling in with this suggestion.

T: M.

RONDEBOSCH, S. AFRICA,
15th August, 1929.

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