



A History of the Conceptions of Limits and Fluxions in Great Britain from Newton to Woodhouse (Classic Reprint)

Florian Cajori

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I. EVERY great epoch in the progress of science is preceded by a period of preparation and prevision. The invention of the differential and integral calculus is said to mark a "crisis" in the history of mathematics. The conceptions brought into action at that great time had been long in preparation. The fluxional idea occurs among the schoolmen-among Galileo, Roberval, Napier, Barrow, and others. The differences or differentials of Leibniz are found in crude form among Cavalieri, Barrow, and others. The undeveloped notion of limits is contained in the ancient method of exhaustion ; limits are found in the writings of Gregory St. Vincent and many others. The history of the conceptions which led up to the invention of the calculus is so extensive that a good-sized volume could be written thereon. We shall not yield to the temptation of lingering on this pre-history at this time, but shall proceed at once to the subject-matter of the present monograph.

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