



**A Treatise on Conic Sections: Containing an
Account of Some of the Most Important Modern
Algebraic and Geometric Methods, 2d Rev. And
Enl (Classic Reprint)**

George Salmon

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Art. 1. Geometrical theorems may be divided into two classes: theorems concerning the magnitude of lines, and concerning their position ; for example, that "the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the sides," is a theorem concerning magnitude; that "the three perpendiculars of a triangle meet in a point," is a theorem concerning position.

2. Theorems of the former class can easily be expressed algebraically. To take the example already given, if the lengths of the sides of a right-angled triangle be a , b , c , the proposition alluded to is written $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. The learner is probably already familiar with this application of algebra to geometry, as the propositions of the Second Book of Euclid all relate merely to the magnitude of lines, and the demonstration of them is much simplified by the use of algebraical symbols.

3. But it is by no means so easy to see how to express algebraically theorems involving the position of lines. Accordingly, although algebra was, soon after its introduction into Europe, applied to the solution of the first class of questions, its use was not extended to this latter class until the year 1637, when Des Cartes, by the publication of his "Geometrie," laid the foundation of the science on which we are about to enter.

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