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A TREATISE  
ON THE  
LINE COMPLEX

BY

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## PREFACE.

THE important character of the extensive investigations into the theory of line-geometry renders it desirable that a treatise should exist for the purpose of presenting these investigations in a form easily accessible to the English student of mathematics. With this end in view, the present work on the Line Complex has been written.

The subject owes its origin to Plücker, who suggested the idea of taking the straight line as the element of space\*. The straight line thus holds to the present subject the relationship in which the point and the plane stand to the older geometry. Types of coordinates of the line were introduced by Cayley and Grassmann; Plücker adopted a coordinate system which is a special form of them.

In his work the *Neue Geometrie des Raumes*, Plücker introduced the conception of a *complex of lines*, i.e. the  $\infty^3$  lines which satisfy one given condition, so that one equation exists between the four coordinates of each line of a complex. He investigated in detail the linear and the quadratic complex; his work contains most of the chief properties of such complexes; in particular he shows that if any screw motion about a certain axis be given to the lines forming a linear complex, these lines still remain within the complex. He discovered the *polar properties*, viz. that the lines of a linear complex in any plane pass through a point, the *pole* of the plane; that the lines of the complex through any point lie in a plane, the *polar plane* of the point; and that if a point moves along any given line, its polar plane turns round another line called the *polar line* of the first line, the relationship between the two lines being reciprocal.

The greater part of the *Neue Geometrie* is concerned with the quadratic complex, of which it contains many of the leading properties; in particular, Plücker shows that while the lines of

\* *System der Geometrie des Raumes*, Düsseldorf, (1846).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

such a complex through any point form in general a quadric cone, there is a certain surface, the *Singular Surface* of the complex, for whose points these cones break up into two planes. Likewise the lines of the complex in any plane, which in general touch a conic, in the case of any tangent plane of the singular surface form two pencils. This surface is the one known as Kummer's surface; it is of the 4th degree and class and possesses 16 nodes and 16 singular tangent planes.

The next investigator in this field was Battaglini, who pursued still further the ideas of Plücker. He adopted as the general quadratic complex one which was afterwards shown to be a special case, viz. the complex formed by the lines for each of which the points of intersection with two given quadrics form a harmonic range; but many of his results apply also to the general complex.

The success of Plücker's researches was limited by the unsuitable (Cartesian) analysis he employed. The second important step in the development of the subject was due to Prof. Felix Klein, who, in his celebrated memoir in volume II. of the *Mathematische Annalen*, introduced the coordinate-system determined by six linear complexes in mutual involution\*. By its adoption a simple and elegant analytical mode of treatment of line-geometry is rendered possible.

Klein further revealed the existence of a singly infinite series of quadratic complexes which have the same singular surface as any given quadratic complex. In his Dissertation (Bonn, 1868) he pointed to the method of Weierstrass for the canonization of two quadratic forms, as the appropriate instrument for classifying the quadratic complex; and this classification was carried out by Weiler. Another service rendered by Klein was his discovery of the analogue existing between the *lines* of three-dimensional space and the *points* of four-dimensional space, together with the equations embodying this relationship. His enunciation of the fact that line-geometry is point-geometry on a quadric contained

\* On any line common to two linear complexes a (1, 1) correspondence of points is determined by the planes through the line, viz. by taking the poles of each plane for the two complexes. If a certain condition, connecting the constants of the equations of the two complexes, is satisfied, these pairs of points form an *involution*.

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C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE

vii

in point-space of five dimensions, offers a new point of view of the subject.

Other important contributions to the theory are introduced from time to time in the text: of these the most fundamental are contained in the investigations of Lie, in which he showed the connexion of line-geometry with sphere-geometry. He established a relationship between the lines and spheres of three-dimensional space of such a nature, that to two intersecting lines there correspond two spheres in contact; and he applied the ideas of both varieties of geometry to the investigation of various types of differential equations.

In the present work the analytical method of treatment with Klein coordinates has been generally adopted; but as it frequently happens that synthetic methods are appropriate, recourse to such has been occasionally made. Since the study of synthetic geometry has been less widely followed in this country than on the Continent, I have not thought it superfluous to insert, by way of Introduction, a short sketch of the simpler portions of that subject which have bearing on the context of the work.

The main object of investigation is, as has been stated, the properties of the line complex, and, in connexion with it, the characteristics of the system of  $\infty^2$  lines common to any two complexes. To any set of  $\infty^2$  lines the name *congruence* is attached; the study of such systems was extensively pursued at a period considerably before Plücker's discoveries took place. The chief property of a congruence is that each of its lines is bitangent to a surface, (including as a special case *two surfaces, a surface and a curve*, etc.). Through any point there pass a definite number  $m$  of the lines of a given congruence, and in any plane there lie a definite number  $n$  of its lines. *If the congruence is the complete intersection of two complexes,  $m = n$ .*

Though not necessarily included in the scope of this treatise, nevertheless, on account of its close connexion with the theory of the complex, a discussion has been given in Chapters XIV.—XVI. of the congruence  $(m, n)$ , and in particular, of the congruences  $(2, n)$ , so elegantly treated by Kummer.

As regards the various authorities on this subject, the student is referred to the work of Prof. Gino Loria *Il passato ed il presente*

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978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

## PREFACE

*delle principali teorie geometriche*, which contains detailed references to the chief memoirs. A useful summary with references is given in Prof. E. Pascal's *Repertorio di matematiche superiori*. The comprehensive treatise of Prof. R. Sturm, *Die Gebilde ersten und zweiten Grades der Liniengeometrie*, is a storehouse of information; his method is, however, *exclusively* synthetic. An introduction to most of the leading ideas is given by Prof. G. Koenigs in his work *La géométrie réglée et ses applications*.

An interesting general account of Line Geometry given by Mr J. H. Grace in the Supplement to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, will be found very serviceable by the student of this subject.

I have thought it not desirable to include in this treatise a description of the important investigations of Prof. E. Study, on account of their distinctness in aim and method from those of the other writers who have built up this subject. I rather refer the reader to Prof. Study's work *Geometrie der Dynamen*.

It gives me much pleasure to express my gratitude to several friends for assistance generously given me; and especially to Mr J. H. Grace, M.A., Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, who read the manuscript, and who, by his criticisms and suggestions, has greatly increased the value of the work. My colleague Mr G. W. Caunt, M.A., late Scholar of St Catharine's College, has read all the proofs; such accuracy as the book possesses is largely due to his carefulness. I am also under obligations to Mr P. W. Wood, B.A., Scholar of Emmanuel College, who has read the proofs and verified many of the examples.

Professor T. J. I'A. Bromwich, Fellow of St John's College, has kindly put at my disposal a collection of examples, most of which were made by him; they have been incorporated in the Miscellaneous Results and Exercises, and add greatly to the book's usefulness.

Finally, I feel it a pleasant duty to express my appreciation of the admirable manner in which the staff of the University Press have carried out the onerous task involved in the printing.

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS.

## INTRODUCTION.

ART.		PAGE
i	Double ratio . . . . .	1
ii, iii	Correspondence of points on the same line . . . . .	2
iv, v	Involution . . . . .	3
vi-x	Correspondences on different lines . . . . .	4
xi-xiv	Collineation . . . . .	8
xv, xvi	Involutions on a curve . . . . .	12
xvii	(2, 2) Correspondences . . . . .	14

## CHAPTER I.

## SYSTEMS OF COORDINATES.

1	Definition of complex and congruence . . . . .	15
2-9	Systems of coordinates . . . . .	16
10-13	Pencil, sheaf and plane system of lines, von Staudt's theorem	21
14	System of sixteen points and planes . . . . .	23

## CHAPTER II.

## THE LINEAR COMPLEX.

15-16	The linear complex . . . . .	25
17	Polar lines . . . . .	27
18	Invariant of a linear complex . . . . .	27
19-21	The special complex, coordinates of polar lines . . . . .	28
22	Diameters and axis of the complex . . . . .	30
23	Standard form of the equation . . . . .	31
24	Pair of polar lines of two complexes . . . . .	32
25-27	Complexes in Involution . . . . .	32
28	Transformation of coordinates . . . . .	36
29	The fifteen principal tetrahedra . . . . .	37

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER III.

## SYNTHESIS OF THE LINEAR COMPLEX.

ART.		PAGE
30–32	Determination of the complex from given conditions . . . . .	39
33	Every linear complex contains two lines of any regulus . . . . .	41
34–36	Collineation and Reciprocity . . . . .	42
37–38	The Null System . . . . .	45
39	Sylvester's method . . . . .	46
40	Automorphic transformations . . . . .	46
41–43	Curves of a linear complex . . . . .	47
44–45	Polar surfaces and curves . . . . .	50
46	Complex equation of the quadric . . . . .	52
47–50	Simultaneous bilinear equations . . . . .	53

## CHAPTER IV.

## SYSTEMS OF LINEAR COMPLEXES.

51	The linear congruence . . . . .	60
52–53	Double ratio of two and of four complexes . . . . .	61
54	The special linear congruence . . . . .	61
55–56	Metrical properties . . . . .	62
57	The cylinder . . . . .	64
58	Systems of three terms . . . . .	65
59–60	The generators and tangents of a quadric . . . . .	66
61	The ten fundamental quadrics . . . . .	68
62	Closed system of sixteen points and planes . . . . .	69
63	Systems of four and of five terms . . . . .	70
64	Invariants of a system of linear complexes . . . . .	71
65	Property of the six residuals . . . . .	73

## CHAPTER V.

## RULED CUBIC AND QUARTIC SURFACES.

66	Ruled surfaces . . . . .	76
67	Ruled cubics . . . . .	76
68	Ruled quartics of deficiency unity . . . . .	77
69	Ruled quartics of zero deficiency . . . . .	78
70–72	Analytical classification of Voss . . . . .	80

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

xi

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE QUADRATIC COMPLEX.

ART.		PAGE
73	The quadratic complex . . . . .	87
74	The tangent linear complex . . . . .	88
75	Singular points and planes of the complex . . . . .	89
76	Singular lines . . . . .	90
77-78	Identity of the surfaces $\Phi_1$ and $\Phi_2$ . . . . .	91
79	Polar lines . . . . .	92
80	Singular lines of the first, second and third orders . . . . .	94
81	The equation of the complex in Plücker coordinates . . . . .	97
82	The singular surface . . . . .	97
83	Double tangents of the surface . . . . .	100
84	Determination of a quadratic complex . . . . .	101
85	The singular surface is a general Kummer surface . . . . .	102
86	Plücker Surfaces . . . . .	105
87	Normal form of the equation of a complex . . . . .	109
88-89	Special and harmonic complexes . . . . .	110
90	Symbolic form of the equation of a quadric . . . . .	112
91	Symbolic forms of Plücker and singular surfaces . . . . .	113

## CHAPTER VII.

## SPECIAL VARIETIES OF THE QUADRATIC COMPLEX.

92-93	The tetrahedral complex . . . . .	114
94-95	Reguli of the complex . . . . .	116
96-97	Other methods of formation of the complex . . . . .	118
98-101	Complexes derived from projective pencils . . . . .	120
102	Reye's complex of axes . . . . .	125
103	Differential equation of the tetrahedral complex . . . . .	127
104-106	Curves of the complex . . . . .	127
107-109	The special quadratic complex . . . . .	130
110-112	The harmonic complex . . . . .	133
113	Painvin's complex . . . . .	138

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE COSINGULAR COMPLEXES.

114-115	The cosingular complexes . . . . .	139
116	Correspondence between lines of cosingular complexes . . . . .	141
117	The complexes $R_4^2, R_4'^2$ . . . . .	142
118	The ten systems of reguli of the congruence (2, 2) . . . . .	143

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

## CONTENTS

ART.		PAGE
119	Focal surface of the congruence (2, 2) . . . . .	145
120	Confocal congruences . . . . .	146
121	The ruled quartic ( $C^2, A, A'$ ) . . . . .	150
122	Projective formation of the quadratic complex . . . . .	151
123	Caporali's Theorem . . . . .	153
124	(1, 1) correspondences leading to cosingular complexes . . . . .	155
125	Equation of $C^2$ referred to special tetrahedron . . . . .	157
126	Cosingular complexes for this coordinate system . . . . .	158
127-128	Involution of tangent linear complexes . . . . .	159
129	Coplanar conics determined by cosingular complexes . . . . .	161
130	Elliptic coordinates of a line . . . . .	162
131	Bitangent linear complexes . . . . .	164
132	Principal Surfaces . . . . .	165
133	Involutory position of two lines . . . . .	167

## CHAPTER IX.

## POLAR LINES, POINTS, AND PLANES.

134-135	Polar lines . . . . .	169
136-139	Corresponding loci of polar lines . . . . .	171
140	Polar Plane . . . . .	174
141	Polar Point . . . . .	176
142	The diameters of the complex . . . . .	177
143	The centre of the complex . . . . .	177

## CHAPTER X.

## REPRESENTATION OF A COMPLEX BY POINTS OF SPACE.

144	Representation of the lines of a quadratic complex by points of three-dimensional space . . . . .	179
145	Reguli of a congruence (2, 2) . . . . .	182
146	Representation of a congruence (2, 2) by points of a plane . . . . .	183
147	Representation of a linear complex by points of three-dimensional space . . . . .	186

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE GENERAL EQUATION OF THE SECOND DEGREE.

148-153	Reduction of the equation of a quadratic complex to a canonical form . . . . .	189
154	Arbitrary constants contained in a canonical form . . . . .	197
155	Complexes composed of linear congruences . . . . .	198
156	Double lines . . . . .	199

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

xiii

ART.		PAGE
157–158	The cosingular complexes and the correspondence between lines of two cosingular complexes . . . . .	200
159	The singular surface corresponding to a canonical form . . . . .	204
160	Degree of the complex . . . . .	206
161–214	Varieties of the quadratic complex . . . . .	206

## CHAPTER XII.

## CONNEXION OF LINE-GEOMETRY WITH SPHERE-GEOMETRY.

215	Coordinates of a sphere . . . . .	233
216	Contact of spheres corresponds to intersection of lines . . . . .	234
217	Points of $\Lambda$ correspond to minimal lines of $\Sigma$ . . . . .	235
218–219	Definition of a surface element. $\Lambda$ surface element of $\Lambda$ defines a surface element of $\Sigma$ . . . . .	236
220	Principal tangents of $\Lambda$ correspond to principal spheres of $\Sigma$ . . . . .	238
221	Pentasppherical coordinates. Double tangents of the singular surface of $C^2$ correspond to foci of surfaces . . . . .	238

## CHAPTER XIII.

## CONNEXION OF LINE-GEOMETRY WITH HYPERGEOMETRY.

222	Definition of point, line, hyperplane of space of four dimensions . . . . .	244
223	Klein's analogy between line-geometry and point-geometry in four dimensions . . . . .	245
224	Schumacher's correlation . . . . .	247
225	Correlatives in $S_4$ of a sheaf, plane system and pencil of $\Lambda$ . . . . .	249
226–227	Metrical geometry . . . . .	251
228	Principal surfaces of $\Lambda$ and lines of curvature of $S_4$ . . . . .	254
229	Line-geometry is point-geometry of an $S_4^2$ in an $S_5$ . . . . .	255
230	Line-geometry in Klein coordinates is identical with point-geometry in $S_4$ with hexasppherical coordinates . . . . .	255
231–232	The congruence $(m, n)$ . . . . .	256

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CONGRUENCES OF LINES.

233	Order and class of a congruence . . . . .	258
234	Halphen's Theorem . . . . .	259
235	Rank of a congruence . . . . .	260
236	Focal points, planes and surfaces . . . . .	261
237	Degree and class of the focal surface . . . . .	261
238	Singular points of a congruence . . . . .	262
239–240	Determination of a ray by two coordinates . . . . .	263
241–248	Application of Schumacher's method of projection to determine the degree, class, and rank of the focal surface . . . . .	265

## CHAPTER XV.

## CONGRUENCES OF THE SECOND ORDER WITHOUT SINGULAR CURVES.

ART.		PAGE
249	The rank of the congruence $(2, n)$ is $n - 2$ . . . . .	276
250	The surfaces $(P)$ . . . . .	276
251	The singular points of the congruence are double points of $\Phi$	277
252	Double rays . . . . .	277
253	The class of a congruence $(2, n)$ is not greater than 7 . . . . .	279
254–256	Number and distribution of the singular points . . . . .	279
257	Equation of a surface $(P)$ . . . . .	282
258	Tetrahedral complexes of the congruence $(2, n)$ . . . . .	283
259	Non-conjugate singular points . . . . .	286
260–262	Reguli of the congruences $(2, n)$ . . . . .	287
263	Confocal congruences . . . . .	291

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE CONGRUENCE OF THE SECOND ORDER AND SECOND CLASS.

264	The congruence $(2, 2)$ is the complete intersection of a linear with a quadratic complex . . . . .	295
265	Confocal congruences . . . . .	296
266	Distribution of the singular points . . . . .	297
267	Every congruence $(2, 2)$ is contained in 40 tetrahedral com- plexes . . . . .	298
268	The Kummer configuration . . . . .	298
269	The Weber groups . . . . .	299
270–271	Reguli of the congruence . . . . .	302
272	Focal surface of the intersection of any two complexes . . . . .	304
273	Double rays of special congruences $(2, 2)$ . . . . .	305

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE GENERAL COMPLEX.

274	The general complex . . . . .	307
275–277	The Singular Surface . . . . .	308
278	The Principal Surfaces . . . . .	310
279	Number of Constants of the complex . . . . .	311
280	The Special Complex . . . . .	311
281–283	Congruences and their Focal Surfaces . . . . .	312
284–285	The ruled surface which is the intersection of three com- plexes . . . . .	316
286	Clifford's Theorem . . . . .	318
287–288	Symbolic forms of the equations of the complex and its singular surface . . . . .	321

## CONTENTS

xv

## CHAPTER XVIII.

DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE  
LINE COMPLEX.

ART.		PAGE
289	Application of the surface element to partial differential equations . . . . .	326
290	The characteristic curves of partial differential equations . . . . .	327
291	The Monge equation of a line-complex . . . . .	328
292	The characteristic curves on an Integral surface are principal tangent curves . . . . .	329
293-294	Partial Differential equation corresponding to a line-complex . . . . .	330
295	Contact transformations of space . . . . .	332
296-299	The trajectory circle. The equations $D_{11}$ , $D_{12}$ , $D_{13}$ . . . . .	333
300	The complex of normals . . . . .	337
301-302	Partial differential equations of the second order associated with line- and sphere-complexes . . . . .	337
303-304	Partial differential equations of the second order on whose Integral surfaces both sets of characteristics are principal tangent curves or lines of curvature . . . . .	339
305-306	Equations $D_{21}''$ , $D_{22}''$ with one and with two general first integrals . . . . .	341
307	Application to the quadratic complex . . . . .	345
	MISCELLANEOUS RESULTS AND EXERCISES . . . . .	347
	INDEX . . . . .	363

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45799-7 - A Treatise on the Line Complex

C. M. Jessop

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

CORRIGENDA.

Art. 39 *for* 'which meet such a pair' *read* 'which meet such pairs.'

Page 184 *for*  $e_2 p_{34} p_{42}$  *read*  $e_2 p_{34} p_{14}$ .