A Short Account of the History of Mathematics

W. W. Rouse Ball

Johann Friedrich Pfaff

I may here mention another writer who has also made a special study of the integral calculus. This was Johann Friedrich Pfaff, born at Stuttgart on Dec. 22, 1765, and died at Halle on April 21, 1825, who was described by Laplace as the most eminent mathematician in Germany at the beginning of this century, a description which, had it not been for Gauss's existence, would have been true enough.

Pfaff was the precursor of the German school, which under Gauss and his followers largely determined the lines on which mathematics developed during the nineteenth century. He was an intimate friend of Gauss, and in fact the two mathematicians lived together at Helmstadt during the year 1798, after Gauss had finished his university course. Pfaff's chief work was his (unfinished) Disquisitioned Analyticae on the integral calculus, published in 1797; and his most important memoirs were either on the calculus or on differential equations: on the latter subject his paper read before the Berlin academy in 1814 is noticeable.