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Much in our daily lives is defined in numerical terms—from the moment we wake in the morning and look at the clock to dialing a phone or paying a bill. But what exactly is a number? When did man begin to count and record numbers? Who made the first calculating machine—and when? At what point did people first think of solving problems by equations? These and many other questions about numbers are answered in this engrossing, clearly written book. Written for general readers by a teacher of mathematics, the jargon-free text traces the evolution of counting systems, examines important milestones, investigates numbers, words, and symbols used around the world, and identifies common roots. The dawn of numerals is also covered, as are fractions, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, arithmetic symbols, the origins of infinite cardinal arithmetic, symbols for the unknown, the status of zero, numbers and religious belief, recreational math, algebra, the use of calculators _ from the abacus to the computer _ and a host of other topics. This entertaining and authoritative book will not only provide general readers with a clearer understanding of numbers and counting systems but will also serve teachers as a useful resource. "The success of Flegg's lively exposition and the care he gives to his surprisingly exciting topic recommend this book to every library." _ Choice