Agostino Ramelli Encyclopedia Article

Agostino Ramelli

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Agostino Ramelli

1531-1590

Italian military engineer and author of *Le diverse et artificiose machine* (Diverse and artifactitious machines, 1588), one of the most important works on machinery written during the Renaissance. Ramelli spent much of his career in the service of Henry of Anjou, who later became French king under the title Henry III. He was wounded while taking part in the 1572 military action against the Huguenots at La Rochelle, and afterward devoted himself to his writings. His great work on machines, written in both Italian and French, contained 194 plates depicting a variety of devices, some of them fanciful and imaginary creations. These included water pumps, mills, cranes, a water wheel, fountains, bridges, catapults, and what Ramelli called a "book wheel." The latter was a rotating fixture that made it possible to keep several books open and read from them at the same time. In the view of some scientists, this was a precursor to the idea of hypertext, as used today on the Internet.