Simon Stevin Encyclopedia Article

Simon Stevin

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1549-1620

Dutch mathematician and military engineer who founded the science of hydrostatics by showing that the pressure exerted by a liquid upon a given surface depends on the height of the liquid and the area of the surface. While a quartermaster in the Dutch army, Stevin invented a way of flooding the polders in the path of an invading army by opening selected gates in the dike. He advised the Prince Maurice of Nassau on building fortifications for the war against Spain. Stevin in 1590 showed that Aristotelian physics was mistaken by showing that two lead balls of unequal weight hit the ground simultaneously when dropped from the tower of Delft. For a long time credit for this demonstration was given to Galileo.