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From Falling Bodies to Radio Waves: Classical Physicists and Their Discoveries

By Emilio Segrè



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Meet a diverse group of highly original thinkers and learn about their lives and achievements: Galileo, a founding father of astronomy and physics; Christiaan Huygens, a seventeenth-century pioneer of wave-particle duality; and Isaac Newton, the English mathematician and physicist who laid the groundwork for a scientific revolution and promoted radical investigation as the means to reveal nature's hidden workings.

This chronicle of physics and physicists traces the development of scientific thought from these originators to their successors, among them Faraday, Watts, Helmholtz, Maxwell, Boltzmann, and Gibbs. Combining his own engaging style with the physicists' original writings, the author illustrates the evolution of individual physical ideas, as well as their roles in the wider field.

A student and colleague of Enrico Fermi, Emilio Segrè (1905–89) made numerous important contributions to nuclear physics, including his participation in the Manhattan Project. A Nobel laureate, Segrè is further renowned for his narrative skills as an historian. Hailed by the *Journal of the History of Astronomy* as "charming and witty," this book is a companion to the author's *From X-Rays to Quarks: Modern Physicists and Their Discoveries*, also available from Dover Publications.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Emilio G. Segrè: The History of Physics

Emilio Segrè (1905–1989) became, in 1928, the first student to earn a doctorate in physics at The University of Rome under Enrico Fermi. A decade later, restrictive fascist laws against Jews in academic positions in Italy turned Segrè into an academic refugee — he settled in Berkeley where, in 1955, with colleague Owen Chamberlain, he proved the existence of the antiproton, a negatively charged proton that destroys itself as well as the matter it strikes. In 1959, Segrè and Chamberlain shared the Nobel Prize for Physics for their work on antiproton.

From 1943 to 1946, Segrè worked as a group leader on the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. In his 1970 book about Fermi, Segrè recalled a crucial atomic test in the New Mexico desert: "In a fraction of a second, at our distance, one received enough light to produce a sunburn. I was near Fermi at the time of the explosion, but I do not remember what we said, if anything. I believed that for a moment I thought the explosion might set fire to the atmosphere and thus finish the earth, even though I knew that this was not possible."

It always seems an opportunity that should not be missed when a major participant in the world of science takes the time and makes the effort to write about his field for a general audience. At Dover we were very pleased to acquire from Emilio Segrè's heirs the rights to publish his outstanding two-volume history of physics written for the general reader and historian of science: *From Falling Bodies to Radio Waves: Classical Physicists and Their Discoveries* and *From X-Rays to Quarks: Modern Physicists and Their Discoveries*, both reprinted by Dover in 2007.

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