



# Bitter Nemesis: The Intimate History of Strychnine

*John Buckingham*

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## **Bitter Nemesis: The Intimate History of Strychnine** John Buckingham

Encouraged by the medicinal success of quinine, early 19th century scientists hoped strychnine, another plant alkaloid with remarkable properties, might also become a new weapon against disease. Physicians tried for over a century, despite growing evidence to the contrary, to treat everything from paralysis to constipation with it. But strychnine proved only to be disappointingly deadly-relegating its fate almost entirely to animal control, the dangerous adulteration of foods, and criminal exploits.

The NOTORIOUS and TRUE story of how a POISONOUS alkaloid...

Bitter Nemesis: The Intimate History of Strychnine presents a scholarly and compelling history of this fascinating chemical substance from its discovery to present times. A renowned editor for the Dictionary of Natural Products, Dr. John Buckingham fuses his eclectic interests into an extraordinary mix of original research spanning the realms of history, medicine, literature, chemistry, and forensics.

...Changed the course of HISTORY!

Uncovering details and logistics from the earliest experiments performed in an era when proper scientific trials for testing new drugs were still in their infancy, the author explores strychnine's trial-and-error contributions to scientific, medical, and forensic developments. He also investigates historical milestones and the perception of strychnine in popular culture-including criminal notoriety, accidental misuse, and new claims of strychnine's benefits that extend through to the present day.

Juxtaposing the real trials, mistrials, and persistent curiosity associated with one of history's most notorious pharmaceutical failures, Bitter Nemesis offers rare insight into the anarchic, yet inspired landscape, practices, and legacy of 19th century science.

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