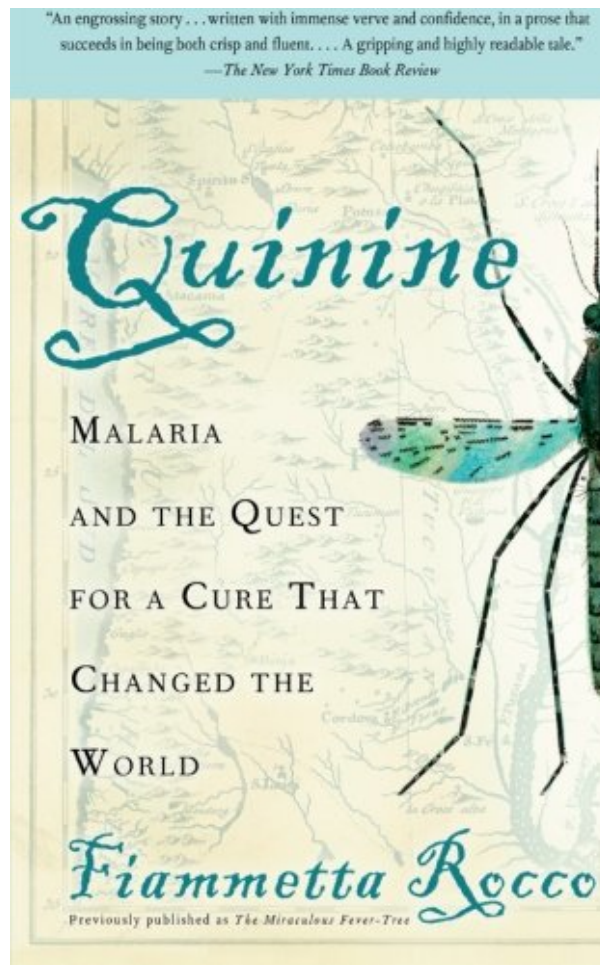


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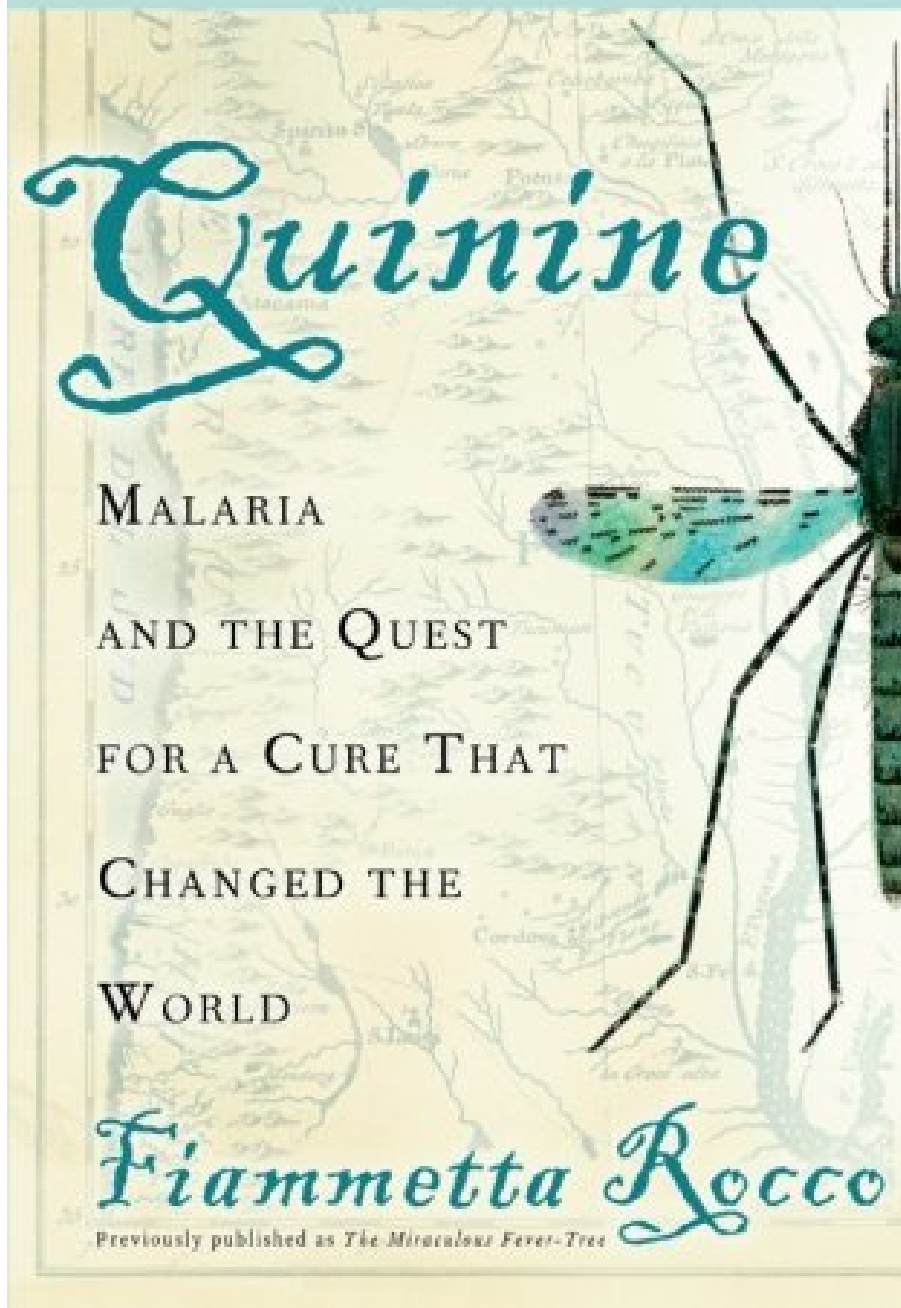


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# QUININE: MALARIA AND THE QUEST FOR A CURE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD BY FIAMMETTA ROCCO PDF

Quinine: The Jesuits discovered it. The Protestants feared it. The British vied with the Dutch for it, and the Nazis seized it. Because of quinine, medicine, warfare, and exploration were changed forever.

For more than one thousand years, there was no cure for malaria. In 1623, after ten cardinals and hundreds of their attendants died in Rome while electing Urban VII the new pope, he announced that a cure must be found. He encouraged Jesuit priests establishing new missions in Asia and in South America to learn everything they could about how the local people treated the disease, and in 1631, an apothecarist in Peru named Agostino Salumbrino dispatched a new miracle to Rome. The cure was quinine, an alkaloid made from the bitter red bark of the cinchona tree.

From the quest of the Englishmen who smuggled cinchona seeds out of South America to the way in which quinine opened the door to Western imperial adventure in Asia, Africa, and beyond, and to malaria's effects even today, award-winning author Fiammetta Rocco deftly chronicles the story of this historically ravenous disease.

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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .86" w x 5.31" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 384 pages

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

not happy

By Amazon Customer

Wasn't clear this was a book, I was doing a search for quinine tablet, not happy

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Bitter pills

By Harry Eagar

Subtitles about X "that changed the world" are off-putting, because most such books are superficial or narrow-minded, or both. Not "Quinine."

Although Fiammetta Rocco's approach is idiosyncratic, it is thorough. She visited many of the key places, from Peru to the Congo, and she read some of the original documents. Also, she has had malaria herself and

comes from a family with an intimate association with the disease, from Panama to her childhood home in Kenya. In the hands of a less skilled writer, her discursive approach would not have worked. Here, it works charmingly.

Not that the story has much charm of its own. Not only is malaria a nasty disease, the men who found the cinchona tree and guessed it would treat the fever and who fought among themselves over religion and profits often, ended up half- to fully mad.

The whole thing is so improbable. Malaria existed only in the Old World, the fever-tree only in the Andes of the New World. The locals drank a powder of the very bitter bark to ease the shakes, which gave the idea to a Jesuit that it might treat the fever in Rome -- at that time, 1630, fever was thought to be a disease, not a symptom.

The intellectual battles over this cure helped to dismantle the belief in Greek medicine, and, much later, the investigation of the disease's transmission also opened up an unexpected area of natural history -- human parasites mediated by insects.

One word that does not appear in "Quinine" is "vaccine." Largish sums of money and very large hopes are being invested in finding a malaria vaccine. There are reasons to think this venture will never succeed. At any event, Rocco ignores this avenue to concentrate on the tried-and-true cure.

She also, thankfully, says not a word about global warming and the expansion of malaria. Malaria is not a tropical disease -- a point she makes repeatedly -- and a warmer world will not extend its reach. It is a disease of poverty, and she includes a world map of malaria's empire in the 21st century that makes the point clear.

Her day job is as a literary editor in London, and she includes a list of novels in which malaria features. It is this sort of personal intrusion that helps raise "Quinine" well above the usual level of techno-historical writing.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A well-crafted, beautifully written book

By John J. Gaudet

Books about things that "change the world," are still popular and relevant to the non-fiction reader. A classic example is Fiammetta Rocco's, *Quinine: Malaria and the Quest for a Cure That Changed the World* (Harper Collins, 2003), a book that traces the history of quinine from its discovery in the 17th Century by Jesuit missionaries in Peru to its use by expanding European colonial powers and its role in the development of modern anti-malaria pills. The priests learned of the bark of the cinchona tree, which was used by Andean natives to cure shivering, at a time when malaria, then known as Roman ague or marsh fever, was devastating southern Europe. The Jesuits eagerly began the distribution of the curative bark, which also helped European explorers and missionaries survive the disease as they entered new territories. The interest generated by Rocco's book is due to her delving into the relationship between man and plant and that as she demonstrates so well, a plant substance can be dealt with at a personal level. She also is the great-granddaughter of Phillippe Bunau-Varilla, a soldier and engineer and at one time the Panamanian ambassador to the United States. A genius in the art of lobbyist statecraft, he has been referred to as the "Inventor of Panama," and was called one of the most extraordinary Frenchmen to ever live, and he, like his granddaughter survived malaria, so Rocco knows about malaria and quinine from street level, so to speak. She also has the advantage of being a really good writer and having travelled or lived in many interesting places. Well-crafted, beautifully written, it is book well worth the read.

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