Pierre-Joseph Pelletier Encyclopedia Article

Pierre-Joseph Pelletier

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Pierre-Joseph Pelletier

1788-1842

French chemist whose work in alkaloid chemistry contributed much to the field of medicine. Working with Joseph-Bienaime Caventou, Pelletier demonstrated that alkaloids, a group of organic compounds derived from plants, contain oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, and, particularly, nitrogen. Together, they isolated chlorophyll, strychnine, brucine, quinine, and caffeine. From their work, chemists have been able to isolate and produce alkaloids for medicinal uses, including quinine, which is used to treat malaria.