

Dr. Goldberger,

TRAIL TO LIGHT: A Biography of Dr. Joseph Goldberger. By Robert P. Parsons. 353 pp. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$3.

By M. F. ASHLEY MONTAGU

THIS is the story of one of the heroic figures of modern medicine, Joseph Goldberger. Born of Jewish parents on a little farm in Hungary, Joseph was brought to America by his immigrant parents when he was 8 years of age. Brought up in the New York ghetto of the Eighties and early Nineties, between the intervals of school Joseph, together with his three brothers and three sisters, helped in the tiny grocery store kept by his parents, but unlike the others he early exhibited his studious bent by his voracious appetite for every kind of book. From the first he was a brilliant pupil, and when he elected to take the civil engineering course at City College he soon ranked among the first five out of a class of 600. The elegance and beauty

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the Scientist Who Conquered Pellagra

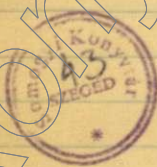
of mathematics coupled with a desire to apply its methods to the improvement of human living conditions had attracted him to civil engineering, but a chance lecture on physiology delivered by Austin Flint Jr., Professor of Physiology at Bellevue, and a talk with Flint following the lecture, revealed to the young Goldberger where his true interests lay.

Compromise and spiritual prevarication were utterly foreign to Goldberger's nature. He went to his parents and explained that he wished to study medicine, and his poor, illiterate parents with fine sympathy and understanding, gave him their blessing. At Bellevue Goldberger soon established himself as the leading student of his class. Some months before his twenty-first birthday Goldberger took his degree, and after serving his internship at Bellevue set up for a brief while in practice in New York, and later in Wilkes-Barre. In the latter town Goldberger met William Dean, the distin-

guished chemist. It did not take Dean long to discover what this young physician must do to realize what was in him. He saw that with time Goldberger would rise to the top of his profession as a practicing physician, but that if he did so medicine would lose a great scientific investigator. The younger man was only too ready to listen to the man he so much admired, the more so as his own views so closely coincided with Dean's. In the Summer of 1899 Goldberger entered the United States Public Health Service.

Goldberger's first assignment was to Ellis Island, then to Reedy Island, the quarantine station at Delaware Rock, soon he was assigned as quarantine officer to Tampico, Mexico, where he made important observations on yellow fever, and almost succumbed to the disease himself; then on to Puerto Rico, where he continued his observations and studies, and back to Tampico again.

In 1906 Goldberger married Mary Farrar of New Orleans, she



the daughter of a socially prominent family, he the son of poor Jewish immigrant parents. It was a romance in the grand style and it was a wonderfully happy marriage. But Goldberger was soon off again on his travels, this time to track down the causes of the typhoid epidemic which had struck the capital. Goldberger's discovery of the cause of "straw itch," his successful inoculation of monkeys with typhus, his discovery of the transmission of the disease by body lice and his being beaten to the announcement of his discovery by the French investigator Nicolle, who had independently made the same discovery, his near death from typhus, his great work on dengue, on measles, diphtheria and other diseases can only be mentioned here.

The work for which his name will live forever in the annals of medical history and public health is associated with pellagra, a disease from which millions have died in untold suffering and

which annually afflicted hundreds of thousands in our own South. This horrible disease, which had puzzled investigators for centuries, yielded up its secrets to Goldberger within a very short time. Goldberger discovered both its causes and its cure and, thanks to his genius, it is now well on the way to being numbered among the past afflictions of mankind.

Goldberger's premature death, from undiagnosed cancer, in 1929, was a great and irreparable loss to medicine and to humanity. He is now among the immortals.

Dr. Parsons, now Captain Parsons of the United States Navy, has told the story of Goldberger's life and work with sympathy and skill. It is particularly fitting that this biography of a sensitive, likable, courageous and utterly selfless member of a persecuted people, a great benefactor and servitor of all mankind, should be published at this time. It makes fascinating and ennobling reading and it deserves to be widely read.