***Gregor Mendel*** 

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Johann Mendel, who changed his name to Gregor when he entered a monastery as a young man, was born on his father's farm on July 22, 1822. By the time he was 11 years old, Johann had learned everything possible from his local school. The schoolmaster suggested that he attend a school in a larger town many miles away. This would be difficult for Mendel's family, because he would need to pay for room and board.

Mendel's father owned a 45-acre farm; however, the family lived a frugal life with little money for "extras." Nevertheless, Mendel's family found a way to send him to Leipnik School, where he studied for one year. His teachers then recommended that Mendel attend Troppau High School, which was 20 miles from his home. Because money was tight, Mendel often went hungry. However, he finished his six-year course in 1840 and graduated with high honors.

Mendel realized that he needed additional schooling to begin a career. Upon graduation, he enrolled at the Philosophical Institute at Olmütz, which was 100 miles away. After two years at the Institute, Mendel was unsure of his future. His physics professor recommended that Mendel join St. Thomas Monastery in Brünn, Austria, now known as Brno, Czech Republic. At the monastery, Mendel did not have to worry about food or shelter, and he received a fine education. In 1843, Mendel was accepted as a trial member at the monastery, and he took his new name, Gregor.

In 1848, Mendel was assigned as a priest, but he soon realized that parish work was not for him. He was reassigned to a high school teaching position and was considered a good teacher. However, Mendel was not able to pass the teaching exam, and it was recommended that he spend two years at the University of Vienna at the monastery's expense. Mendel completed his studies, but again he was unable to pass the exam.

Mendel continued to teach on a temporary basis, but he spent the majority of his time in the monastery gardens. He developed an interest in what we now call heredity, and he experimented with pea plants in an attempt to prove his theories. Mendel decided to cross-fertilize plants with opposite characteristics; such as tall plants with short plants, and plants that produced smooth peas with those that produced wrinkled peas. Through these experiments, Mendel was able to set out a theory that all living things have aspects called dominant and recessive traits.

In February 1865, Mendel presented his findings to the Natural History Society of Brünn and published them under the title "Experiments in Plant Hybridization" in a scientific journal. No one seemed interested in Mendel's findings. Even when he sent his papers to renowned University of Munich professor Karl von Nägeli, his discoveries went unappreciated. The years passed, and Mendel realized that his findings were not going to be recognized in his lifetime.

In 1868, Mendel was elected Abbot and Prelate of St.Thomas Monastery, which left him little time to continue his studies and experiments. He led a comfortable life for the next 15 years. Gregor Mendel died on January 6, 1884 at the age of 62. Sixteen years later, Mendel's findings were rediscovered.

 In 1900, three botanists in different parts of Europe came across his papers. Hugo de Vries, Carl Correns, and Erich Tschermak praised Mendel's research and achieved similar results in their own studies. Mendel's principles of heredity began to be referred to as the Mendelian Laws, and these laws are considered to be the foundation of the modern study of genetics.

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