

Abbot Gregor Mendel

He was born in the 1850's at Brunn, Austria - where he set out to clarify his mind about the heredity of peas - which he did not realize at the time was about to throw a lasting light on the heredity of human beings. Mendel had a brilliant mind, but it was simple and direct - this being the chief reason he succeeded where others failed. He confined his studies to his own little thirty-by-seven-foot patch and not to wander afield (probably because he was too fat to travel comfortably). In his garden were plants with many different characteristics. Mendel decided to concentrate on just one character at a time. So, as one instance, he set out to see what would happen when he mated plants of a pure red-flowering strain with those that habitually bore white flowers. Thorough in his methods, he bred together hundreds of such plants. And this was the result: The offspring were all red-flowered.

Had the influence of the white parent been lost? No, because when Mendel mated any two second-generation red-flowered plants together, the offspring were three in four red-flowered, but one out of four was pure white like the white grandparent. This proved that the white factor had been carried along hidden in the preceding generation.

Further investigation showed that the third generation red-flowered plants were not all alike, even though they looked the same. In only one out of three cases were they "pure" red-flowered, like the