CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PRELATE AND DIGNITARY

METEOROLOGY was the science to which Mendel remained most inviolably faithful, even to the very end of his life. His election as prelate of the monastery of St. Thomas brought with it cares and duties which cut him off from his other scientific activities. Had he been able to foresee the future there can be little doubt that he would have preferred to remain in a subordinate position, able to go on teaching his boys and cultivating his flowers. He had found his purest happiness during the years of research, when he was developing his natural aptitudes. No doubt he must have rejoiced for a time when the fellow-members of his order chose him for their chief, since this was a great honour. When he looked back upon his own past as a peasant-lad at Heinzendorf who had had so hard a struggle to secure a high-school education, often ailing and always poor; and when he saw himself as the young supply-teacher who had twice been rejected as incompetent by the distinguished examiners at Vienna University—he cannot but have been amazed to find himself at forty-six a mitred abbot, and prelate of the wealthy monastery at Altbrünn. It was, indeed, a brilliant and alluring position. All the same, a letter he wrote to his brother-in-law Schindler shortly before the election shows that this was not entirely unexpected. He was of the most suitable age, for (as mentioned in an earlier chapter) the community preferred to choose a comparatively young man as prelate because of the heavy taxation involved by every change in the office. He was active, practical-minded, just, and kindly. The brethren could hardly have wished for a better chief.

Here is the letter to Schindler, under date March 26, 1868:

"MY DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW,

"In reply to your inquiry whether Johann[1] is coming home for the holidays, I may tell you that he looks forward very much to seeing you all once more. Certainly he will come, but the day of his arrival cannot yet be fixed. He will let you know later. I am delighted with his conduct and his diligence, and can only hope that he will go on as he has begun. Next Monday (March 30th) at noon we shall have at length to elect a prelate. We shall only be twelve electors, for one of the priests, Pater Fulgenz, is seriously ill with a nervous fever. It is still quite uncertain which of us will be the lucky one. Should the choice fall on me, which I hardly venture to hope, I shall send you a wire on Monday afternoon. If you don't get a telegram, you will know that some one else has been elected. No other news.

"Best love to you, to my sisters, to my brother-in-law Alois, and to your families.

"GREGOR."

On April 1, 1868, the "Tagesbote aus Mähren und Schlesien" announced the election of Gregor Mendel as prelate. The notice runs: ". . . The population greets the election with undivided joy. We are informed by many of the citizens of Altbrünn that a proposal is afoot to deliver a congratulatory address to the prelate. This time, at any rate, there is justification for the Latin adage: 'Vox populi, vox dei'."

After the election came the wrench of saying farewell to the school. Mendel was well aware that his pupils were greatly attached to him, and he, on his side, had responded with all the affection of his kindly nature. But he was not wont to wear his heart upon his sleeve. Neither in his letters nor in other manifestations of his life do we find any indication of sentimentalism or romanticism. Wishing to avoid needless displays of feeling, he asked the headmaster to be good enough to

[1] Johann Schindler, Mendel's eldest nephew, then at school in Brünn.

announce his approaching departure. One of his then pupils informs me that they were all a good deal mortified at his leaving them without a personal farewell. Yet that, far from being cold-hearted, Mendel was full of thoughtful consideration for his boys was made plain to them when the headmaster summoned three of the poorest among them to his room to present them, at Mendel's request, with a share each of his last month's salary, all of which was to be divided among them. Wishing to show their gratitude to their beloved teacher and their regret at parting from him, eighty of the boys in one of the classes bought two silver candelabra and sent them to Mendel with a deputation begging him to accept them in memory of the givers. He had no need of a memento to save him from forgetting the happiest time of his life. He seldom failed to recognise any of his sometime pupils whom he chanced to meet in later years. The boys who looked him up at the monastery, always secured a friendly reception. He saw to it that many impoverished lads should receive allowances from the monastery.

Mendel was prompt in informing his learned friend Nägeli (in whose letters a tone of condescension had sometimes been observable) of this lift in his position, which now made him at least the social equal even of so distinguished a professor. "In my circumstances," writes Mendel, "there has recently occurred an altogether unexpected and complete change. On March 30th the chapter of the monastery to which I belong elected me their lifelong chief. Thus all at once, from my modest sphere as teacher of experimental physics, I am translated into one in which a great deal seems strange to me, and it will certainly cost me a good deal of time and pains until I feel myself at home in my new duties. This will not prevent my going on with the hybridisation experiments of which I am so fond; indeed, I hope I shall be able to give still more time and attention to them as soon as I have worked myself into my new post."

That hope was not destined to be fulfilled. Mendel had

underestimated the obligations that would be entailed upon him by the new dignity. In those days the position of a mitred prelate was in any case an outstanding one. But Mendel, being elected as successor to Napp, had to take over the heritage of that remarkable personality, of a man who had played a leading role in the cultural and political life of the town, nay of the whole country. What the authorities thought of the prelate of Altbrünn is made plain by several letters found among Mendel's papers, letters in which each new lord lieutenant of Moravia entering into his office at Brünn informs the prelate of his arrival and expresses readiness to serve the latter in every possible way. But there were numerous incidental claims besides those of State affairs. It was the calls made upon his time by the numberless societies of one sort or another which abounded in Brünn even more than in most provincial capitals, that were responsible for bringing Gregor Mendel's work as an investigator to a close. Henceforward he had neither the leisure nor the repose indispensable to a life of research.

In outward circumstances, the prelate of Altbrünn was very favourably placed. The Augustinian monastery of St. Thomas is one of the wealthiest in the country. The prelate's apartments consist of a suite of rooms, some of which are stately chambers with parqueted floors, costly furniture, and fine old masters on the walls. The cuisine of the Augustinians is famous, and for a long time it has been the practice of the daughters of well-to-do families in Brünn to take lessons in cooking from the monastery cook. Even the ordinary conventuals were prone to grow fat, and Pater Gregor's "corporation," to which he refers in some of his letters to Nägeli, as interfering with his botanical excursions, showed no inclination to melt away after his election as prelate.

When his girth became too burdensome, Prelate Mendel had recourse to various measures designed to remove the superfluous flesh, such as rising at four in the morning, and restricting his consumption of fluid, but these were of little avail. His tendency to put on fat was constitutional, and ran

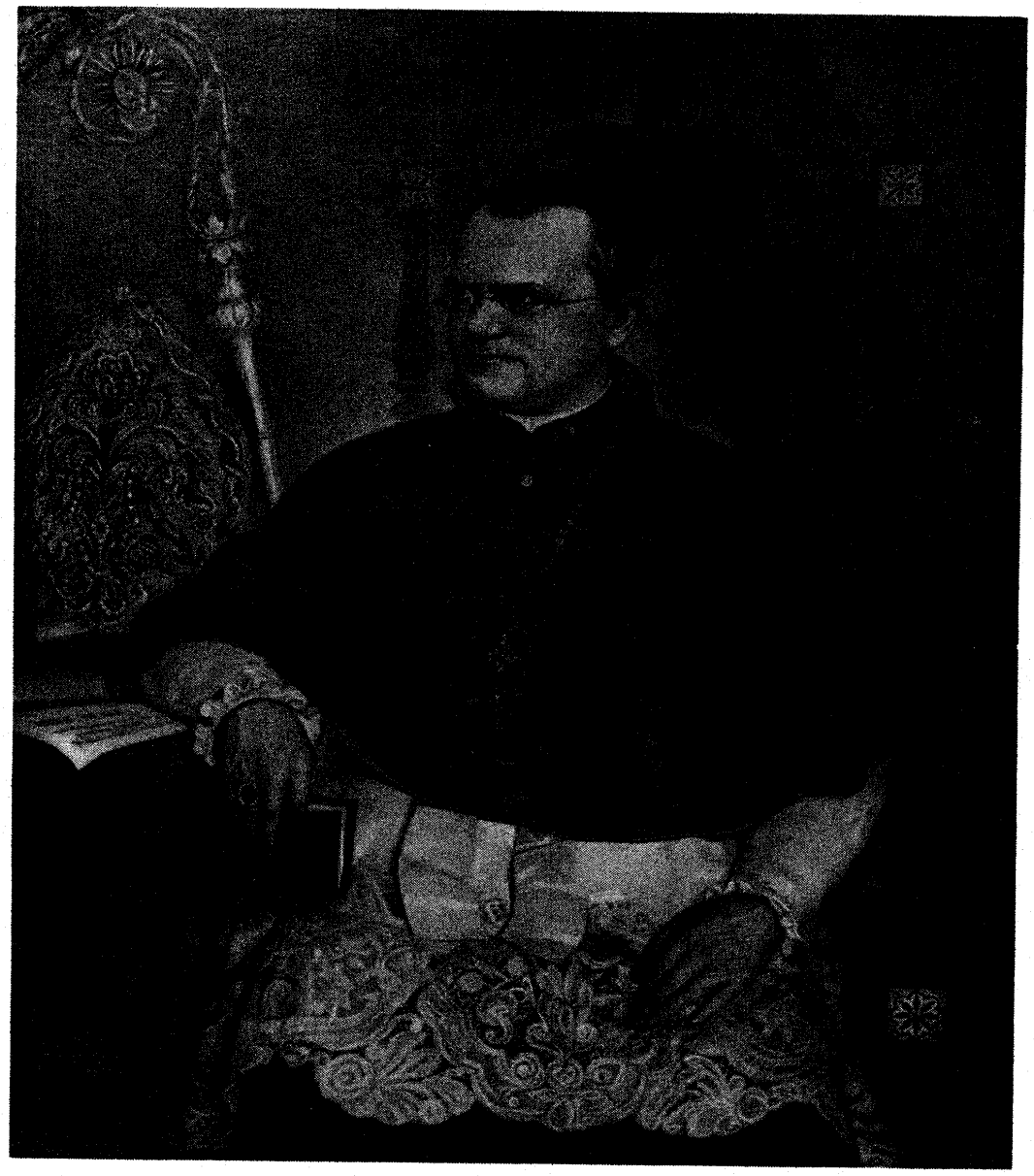

Plate IX. The "Great Prelate Portrait"

in the family. Mendel's sister Theresia Schindler, though she was an active worker, was the stoutest woman in Heinzendorf.

We have three pictures of Mendel belonging to the days of his prelacy: a charcoal sketch by Zenker, which was given to the author by Clemens Janetschek; a picture which hangs in the prelacy; and another, a more successful representation (known as the "Great Prelate Portrait") belonging to the Moravian Mortgage Bank of which Mendel was chairman for several years. This painting is an enlargement from a photograph which was probably taken in the year 1882. Plate X, facing page 264, is a print from it. In the oil painting in the prelacy Mendel is shown in full canonicals, with his mitre on the table beside him and the crozier leaning against the wall behind. (See Plate IX.)

As prelate, Mendel gave freely out of his abundance. From an obituary notice in a newspaper I cull the following passage: "In his activities as abbot he won the respect and honour of all by his free-handedness, affection, and kindliness, so that he can be justly said to have had no personal enemies. He never denied help to any who applied for it. Prelate Mendel had the rare gift of being able to bestow alms without letting the petitioner feel any sense of dependence."

The prelate's most intimate friend among the brethren was Pater Paul Křižkovsky, then working in Olmütz as organist and composer. In other respects than this, Mendel had little concern with music or with the fine arts in general. His nephew Dr. Ferdinand Schindler tells me that he very rarely went to the theatre or to a concert. His reading was almost exclusively restricted to scientific books. Yet even though, by the nature of his talents, he was confined to a highly specialised field, he was invariably willing to help the advance of anything that seemed to him good and beautiful. He was a bountiful patron of all the very numerous humanitarian, scientific, and artistic societies of Brünn.

In the year 1872 he was given a certificate of honour by the Brünn Musical Society as an expression of thanks for his

munificent support. In the account books of the other societies, however, Mendel's name is almost always to be found among the few who contributed more than the specified subscription. Naturally, too, this man who was so willing to help strangers, did everything in his power on behalf of his relatives. He was especially generous to the children of his younger sister Theresia, acting towards them as a second father, for he had never forgotten the way in which their mother had renounced her share of the family heritage in order to assist him in his studies. All three of the sons were sent to Brünn High School at his cost, and were while there kept under his kindly supervision. Johann, the eldest, became for a few years assistant-master at Brünn Technical School, but died prematurely. The other two sons, Alois and Ferdinand, both qualified as doctors, and are still in practice not far from Mendel's birthplace at Heinzendorf. While attending school in Brünn, the nephews were housed in the Klosterplatz (nowadays the Mendelplatz) at Altbrünn, opposite the prelacy, and even on weekdays they often went to see their uncle in his rooms or to have a walk with him in the monastery garden. They spent Sunday afternoons with him as a regular thing. There would be talk about home; or they would look at the pictures in his rooms; or, especially when they got older, they would play chess with him. Gregor Mendel was a good chess-player, with a taste for solving problems, and a faculty for composing them. His problems did not, perhaps, conform to the strict rules of modern German chess-experts, but they were (so his nephews assured me) original, by no means rule-of-thumb, and always distinguished by some salient idea. Sometimes it would turn out that there was an easier solution than the one their author had had in mind, a discovery at which he would not be altogether pleased. "It is interesting to learn," wrote W. Bateson to Dr. A. Schindler, "that the talent for chess is hereditary in Mendel's family.[1] The capacity for clear and penetrating

[1] Dr. Ferdinand Schindler, the younger of the two surviving nephews, has composed and published a good many chess problems.

analysis which was requisite for the solution of the problem of heredity must certainly be akin to that which makes a good chess-player."

Mendel was greatly attached to his original home, although, because of his professional duties, he was rarely able to visit it. For this reason he relied upon his nephews to give him all possible details when they returned to Brünn after the holidays. In 1870 he went to stay with his sister Theresia, at Heinzendorf. On this occasion he went on a botanical excursion to the Wessiedler Berg, accompanied by little Alois, who remembers the incident perfectly. Before returning to the monastery, and taking the boy with him, he subjected him to a private examination in arithmetic and other subjects of elementary instruction, and was well pleased with the result. Both the surviving nephews have an unmistakable resemblance to their uncle in face. The last time Mendel visited Heinzendorf was in 1873, when, at the parish church of Gross-Petersdorf, he performed the marriage ceremony at the wedding of his nephew Alois Sturm. In various ways, Mendel participated actively in the destinies of his native region. Frequent conflagrations had reduced some of the inhabitants of Heinzendorf to poverty. Mendel gave the initiative in the establishment of a fire brigade; and (although in spite of his large income as prelate he never had much money to spare, since his private charities were extensive and he defrayed the educational expenses of his three nephews) he gave no less than 3,000 kronen to help in defraying the preliminary expenses. Thenceforward he continued to take a keen interest in the Heinzendorf fire brigade. He was delighted when the grateful community bestowed on him the "freedom of the burg," and when the fire brigade made him an honorary member—signalising this appointment by sending him an artistically decorated certificate to that effect.

As prelate of Altbrünn, Mendel kept open house, especially during the early years. On festival occasions, notably on the day of St. Thomas, who was the patron saint of the monastery,

and on Corpus Christi day, there were always a great many guests in what had aforetime been and was still sometimes called the Königinkloster. The masters at the Altbrünn school (one of them, Mifka, has more than once confided to me how pleasant are his gastronomic memories) and various scientific friends of Mendel's, such as Professor Makowsky, were among the usual guests at the Corpus Christi banquet. Mendel knew how to celebrate a feast-day suitably. Nothing pleased him more than to give others pleasure, and some of the old servants at the monastery still love to talk of how Christmas was kept there in Prelate Mendel's day.

In addition to his ecclesiastical functions, Mendel had to act as supervisor of the monasterial estate. This work was no sinecure. One of the most important of the monasterial possessions was a great dairy-farm in the neighbourhood of Brünn, whose value has of late decades swelled into millions, for the fields have become building land. Then there was a ranger's lodge in Bysterz, to the north-west of Brünn; also a large estate consisting of dairy-farms in Teschen and Deutsch-Malkowitz, parts of the German-speaking district near Wischau, and another dairy-farming estate near Göting to the south-east of Brünn. When Mendel needed rest and change he was fond of going to spend a few days at the forest-ranger's lodge near Bysterz, which was a quiet and out-of-the-way place. But visits of inspection to the other estates took up a good deal of time and were not always congenial. In the spring of 1868 he complained to Nägeli of how his experimental plants had had a mishap on one such occasion.[1] Nägeli had sent him a box full of hawkweeds. It arrived on May 17th, when the prelate was just setting out upon a long tour of inspection. "I had told the gardener to treat the hawkweeds with the utmost care, potting one specimen of each kind, while the remainder were to be planted out. When I got home a few days ago I found, to my great concern, that about half of the potted specimens were dead, presumably because they had

[1] Correns, Letters, p. 222.

been too freely watered." He writes in a like strain to Nägeli two years later (June 1872): "Building operations in the remoter dairy farms and other economic matters have claimed all my attention for several weeks, and when I got back to Brünn at Whitsuntide I was for a time fully occupied with other urgent concerns. Only during the last few days have I been my own master once more, and able to resume my favourite occupation."[1] During his excursions, short or long, and in later years when he had to sally forth upon official business in Brünn, the prelate had a faithful companion, the old servant Josef. Six years older than Mendel, Josef was a homely little fellow who followed his master about like a shadow. Mendel was extremely sensitive to draughts, and to the wind out of doors—but Josef was always on hand with a cloak. From time to time the prelate would even trust Josef, though with reluctance, to take the periodical barometric and thermometric observations.

Mendel now travelled a good deal, in addition to the beforementioned business journeys and to excursions into the Moravian Karst and into the Marsgebirge, for his income now enabled him to see a wider world. On a visit to Rome he made the acquaintance of Mertel, in later days a cardinal; and on his return from this Italian tour, he brought back the seeds of the vines which still flourish in his experimental garden. The date of this visit is uncertain. Pater Clemens Janetschek believes, indeed, that it took place as early as 1864, when Mendel was still only an ordinary conventual; but Dr. A. Schindler thinks that it was as prelate that his uncle went to Rome, to pay his respects to the pope. I have already mentioned that in the year 1871 Mendel visited Kiel as delegate of the Brünn Apicultural Society, in the company of Dr. Žiwansky, who was chairman of that organisation. On the way back from Kiel, he stayed for a few days in Berlin. In 1873, accompanied by his two nephews, he spent a week in Vienna, where an international exhibition was being held. Professor

[1] Correns, Letters, p. 29.

Makowsky told me that he and Mendel were often in the Alps together, and that Mendel as prelate, despite his increasing girth, remained a vigorous field botanist. In 1879, accompanied by Councillor Klimesch and the ever-faithful Josef, he spent a holiday at Venice, staying at the Hotel Bauer, and, having partaken too freely of some fish fried in oil, he was still ailing when he got back to Brünn. I learn from his relatives at Heinzendorf of a Rhenish tour, on the way back from which he visited his old home. His nephews tell me that he used often to speak of England and English conditions with such familiarity that they believe he must have crossed the Channel.

Thus we form a false picture of Mendel if we think of him only as a scientist and a recluse. He did not spend all his days behind convent walls, and was familiar with a wider world. Unfortunately, however, we know little about these journeys except that they took place. More than once I have had occasion to deplore the scarcity of positive information concerning the details of Mendel's life. By temperament he was more inclined to the positive study of facts than to writing down his reflections thereupon. Nowadays we should describe him as an extrovert rather than an introvert. He did not keep a diary, and he wrote comparatively few letters. Such epistles as have come down to us deal almost exclusively with matters of fact, rarely referring to himself or to his plans. It is in their relationships with women that most men are apt to reveal a side of their nature which is otherwise veiled; but Mendel's profession, if it did not entirely exclude such tender relationships, has at any rate left them in the dark. Niessl, indeed, used to speak of a certain Frau Rotwang whom Mendel called upon frequently in earlier years. Details concerning this friendship are lacking. Every child in Altbrünn knew the kindly prelate. But though he was so good-natured, he was essentially reserved. He had very numerous acquaintances, but few intimates; and I think that during the closing years of his life the number of those who could regard themselves as his friends was very small indeed.

During the years of his prelacy, an overwhelming large proportion of his time was occupied in his multifarious public activities. In the year 1869, the Brünn Society for the Study of Natural Science of which he had been one of the founders elected him vice-chairman. This was the year in which he gave his lecture *On Hieracium-Hybrids obtained by Artificial Fertilisation*; and during this same year he took the chair at many of the other meetings. In 1870, however, he seems to have resigned his membership, having presumably been estranged by one of the petty disputes which are common in such bodies. His name does not appear again in the "Proceedings" until after his death.

In 1870 he was elected on to the Committee of the Royal and Imperial Moravian and Silesian Society for the Furtherance of Agriculture, Natural Science, and Knowledge of the Country, known for short as the Agricultural Society. Being popular, he headed the list in respect of the number of votes. During the years next ensuing he devoted himself with much zeal to promote the activities of a body which was, to some extent, a rival of the Brünn Society for the Study of Natural Science. It ran a scientific periodical, supervised a museum in Brünn, was entrusted with the disbursement of subventions on behalf of agriculture, had the right of inspecting schools of agriculture and horticulture, and contributed in various ways to the advance of pisciculture and forestry as well. It was thus an important body, and Mendel's work as a member of the committee was no sinecure. From 1868 until his death (1884) he was, as aforesaid, the society's representative at examinations for fruit growers and vegetable growers. These examinations were often held in Czech, a language which Mendel understood well enough, but spoke haltingly. In the sub-committee of territorial subventions, whose important business it was to allot the agricultural subventions of the State to the various rural communes, agricultural schools, and agricultural exhibitions, he acted as referendary, compiling the reports. At one time he would participate in the sittings of the committee

for the discussion of a legislative proposal to promote the making of by-roads; at another, he would report upon the need of providing elementary schools with a library of works on agriculture; at another, he would come forward with a proposal that the Brünn committee of the international exhibition should be assisted by public money.

A good many books were sent to him for review in the "Reports of the Agricultural Society," especially works dealing with natural science. In the documents of the Agricultural Society relating to the years from 1869 to 1874 we frequently come across the prelate's neat handwriting, and note, as usual, the pithy way in which he expresses his views. Count Dubsky was the chairman of the Moravian and Silesian Agricultural Society, while the vice-chairman was d'Elvert, well known as a local historian. Parliamentary duties made extensive claims upon Dubsky, as a member of the Upper House, and upon d'Elvert, as a member of the Lower, so in 1872 Dubsky wrote asking Mendel to take supreme charge of the current affairs of the Agricultural Society. For the next two years, therefore, Mendel functioned as chairman, though not actually holding that office. In addition he continued to give expert opinions upon all kinds of scientific questions. In June 1871 a certain Franz Kudielka sent him a specimen of yarn made from the twigs of the mulberry, asking him to recommend it for industrial purposes in the "Reports." Mendel declined to do this, on the ground that the yarn had not yet been scientifically tested, nor utilised as yet on a sufficiently large scale. Another time he gave an opinion concerning a caterpillar which was devastating the flax crop, and named the species to which it belonged. He recommended that a report upon *Austrian Pisciculture* by E. Weeger should be published in the "Reports." In April 1872 he proposed that the extant issues of the "Meteorological Journal" should be sent to the various societies of the district, with a note calling attention to the importance of the periodical. I mention all these minor activities in order to show what it was which made such extensive

raids upon Mendel's time and energy. He attended the meetings of the committee of the Agricultural Society with the utmost regularity, being probably one of the junior members, for he was frequently appointed scrutineer when elections were held. He was referendary of the sub-committee for the assistance of agriculture, almost all the matters relating to subventions passing through his hands.

I believe he remained a member of the committee of the Agricultural Society down to the end of his days, and that even in later years he was occasionally present at its meetings; but from the time when his trouble with the government about the taxation of the monasteries began, he ceased to function as an active member. In 1880 Count Serenyi proposed him for the chairmanship, but Mendel declined with thanks. His only subsequent participation in the activities of the society was in connexion with a proposal to establish meteorological stations throughout the country. This was, naturally, a matter of keen interest to him.

Another serious claim upon Mendel's time came from the State authorities, who were not slow to realise and to take advantage of the thoroughness and conscientiousness with which he performed any duty entrusted to him. In January 1870 the minister for finance appointed Mendel a member of the territorial committee for the adjustment of the land tax in Moravia, the appointment being made "in reliance upon your well-tried loyal and patriotic sentiments and your thorough knowledge of agriculture and land values both in general and in particular." Various other appointments of the same kind followed.

On March 21, 1872, the emperor made him a commander of the order of Francis Joseph "in recognition of your meritorious and patriotic activities." He had to make the most of this as a reward for his self-sacrificing devotion to all kinds of uninteresting (and often valueless) routine work which took him away from his beloved flowers and bees. In actual fact, moreover, the distinction, as was usual in the Austria of those

days, was conferred upon him rather because of his rank as prelate than because of any services he had performed!

In 1873 a new function was imposed upon him. The lord lieutenant requested him to take over from Abbot Kalliwoda of Raigern the position of curator of the Moravian Institute for Deaf Mutes. We can well understand, therefore, the plaint with which in that same year Mendel opened his last letter to Nägeli: "The Hieracia have bloomed and faded here once again without my having been able to pay them more than the most fleeting attention. It is a real grief to me that I have to neglect my plants and my bees in this way."

As the years passed, the shower of dignities and offices became heavier. On April 6, 1876, the Moravian diet appointed Mendel a member of the administrative council of the Moravian Mortgage Bank, and at the same time deputy chairman of that institution. When in 1881 Dr. R. von Ott, who was chairman, died, Mendel succeeded to this post, and filled it until shortly before his death. The office was one which carried with it a substantial income, but the chairman had to work hard for his money. Several times a week, and sometimes every day, attended by Josef, Mendel visited the bank (where the staff had a great affection for him) and devoted an hour or two to current business.

The chairmanship of the Moravian Mortgage Bank was really a political appointment, being given (as it still is to-day) by the majority in the diet to some one holding the political views of that majority. Mendel, therefore, was not appointed chairman because he was prelate, but because he was known to be of a certain political complexion. Whereas most ecclesiastical dignitaries of those days were pronounced clericalists or ultramontanes, he was a declared adherent of the German-Liberal Constitutional Party which then controlled a majority of votes in the diet, and to which at election times Mendel gave important aid with his vote and influence. He had, indeed, never made any secret of his political opinions. I learn from Dr. F. Schindler that his uncle

Gregor was a regular reader of the "Neue Freie Presse" of Vienna. Some of the Augustinians at St. Thomas subscribed to "Das Vaterland," the clericalist organ, but Josef never ventured to lay a copy of this periodical upon his master's table.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE "STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT"

SINCE Mendel was a pronounced liberal, it was extremely mortifying to him that the struggle which almost monopolised his attention during the last ten years of his life and which aroused in him a rancour which no public honours could allay, should have been forced upon him by the German-Liberal Party. In this futile and wearisome fight against the government, Mendel showed the vigour and the mental perseverance which had characterised his scientific work. Being firmly convinced of the rectitude of the cause he was advocating, he carried on indefatigably this contest for what he believed to be right, being able at first to enlist the aid of others who were affected by what he looked upon as unjust taxation; but later, when he stood alone, he continued, a second Michael Kohlhase, down to the day of his death to wage a lone battle against all the world. In this chapter I propose to recount the various phases of a contest thanks to which, alas, Mendel was finally diverted from scientific research.

In the spring of 1874 the German-Liberal Party in the Reichsrat introduced a bill of which the clauses relevant to the present issue run as follows: "1. In order to supply the financial needs of Catholic worship, and especially in order to augment the stipends of parish priests, the incumbents of ecclesiastical benefices and the regular religious communities shall make the hereinafter specified contribution to the religious fund.—2. The basis of the contribution to the religious fund shall be the taxable value of the entire property of the benefice or community, inclusive of any endowments enjoyed by these, but exclusive of property embodied in libraries, scientific collections, and art treasures." Subsequent clauses give details concerning the assessment. It is plain from the wording that there is no question of taxing church property for the ordinary

purposes of State, seeing that the levy is only to be made in favour of the religious fund out of which the financial needs of Catholic worship and the stipends of the secular clergy are to be defrayed.

The requisite majority having voted for the bill, it was approved by the emperor on May 7, 1874, and was officially published during the same year. There can thus be no question that the law came into being in a perfectly constitutional way. Its formal enactment by the government, however, did not take place till nearly a year later, on March 25, 1875. Two days afterwards, on March 27th, the lord lieutenant of Moravia instructed the monastery of St. Thomas to make a return of its property. Complying with this order, on May 16, 1875, Mendel sent the following inventory: "The personal property of the monastery amounts to fl. 516,701, and the real estate to fl. 260,810."

Mendel, it will be observed, says nothing about income, and does not specify the allowances to the abbot and the fathers, though these have to be deducted before making the assessment.

On October 10, 1875, under the operation of the before-mentioned law, the monastery was ordered to pay to the religious fund the sum of 7,336 guldens for each year of the five-year period 1875–1880. A note was appended to the effect that any appeal against this assessment must be lodged some time during the next four weeks with the Ministry for Public Worship and Education, or, if preferred, it might be sent to the lord lieutenant's office in Brünn.

A similar document was delivered to all the monasteries, where it aroused great indignation. But Mendel's wrath exceeded that of his clerical brethren. As previously said, he was far from being an ultramontane; and, since he was a faithful supporter of the constitution, he was loath to resist any properly accredited law. He felt, however, that this particular law was really unconstitutional, that it had been passed in defiance of the fundamental principles of the State. He therefore contested its validity. Fuel was thrown into the

flames by the reminder from his monastic associates that on assuming the office of prelate he had sworn to protect the property of the monastery. His word was his bond, and the thought of being unfaithful to a pledge was intolerable to him. That was why he determined to resist what he regarded as an unjust law; and he grew continually more stubborn in his resistance, partly because of the natural obstinacy of a man who had been born a peasant, and partly because some of the government officials with whom he had to deal were injudicious (to say the least of it) in the steps they took to enforce the claim.

On November 1, 1875, Mendel sent his appeal or protest, the first of a long series, to the lord lieutenant's office. At the same time, "since I do not close my eyes to the fact that an increase in the Moravian religious fund is necessary," he accompanied the protest by a "voluntary contribution" of fl. 2000.

"This is the largest amount," he wrote, "which the respectful undersigned can withdraw from their establishment without doing it serious harm. . . . Attention may here be drawn to the fact that the monastery is still liable to the religious fund for the 10 arrear payments of fl. 588 belonging to the years 1850–1865, when the monastery, being in financial difficulties, was not able to pay its whole dues."

Within a few days the prelate received an answer from the lord lieutenant's office. The original demand was renewed, payment for the year 1875 being insisted upon within thirty days. The fl. 2000 were sent back. If the monastery held that there was anything irregular about the assessment, or that thereby "ecclesiastical competence" was infringed in any way, a special appeal against the enforcement of the law should be lodged.

Up to this point some sort of accommodation, some sort of friendly settlement, had been possible. Even for a well-to-do monastery, the new tax was a heavy burden, so that the authorities may well have believed that it was the amount of the levy

which had aroused indignation and had instigated resistance. Reading between the lines of the answer from the lord lieutenant's office we cannot fail to see that the government would have been ready to reduce the assessment if the monastery had furnished arithmetical proof (as Mendel's successors furnished it) that the property had been over-estimated, and that by the payment of the sum actually demanded "ecclesiastical competence"—this meaning, in plain terms, the appointments of the prelate and the conventuals—would be unduly diminished. In fact, the lord lieutenant was giving the prelate a hint to follow the usual practice in old Austria where "the forbidden was allowed," namely to recognise the validity of the law and then to evade it.

Mendel, however, was extremely straightforward by nature. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, and he was in no mood for accommodation. Ignoring the hint, in his second letter to the lord lieutenant the prelate declares that the sum of fl. 2,000 enclosed in his previous letter had been in no wise an admission of indebtedness but a freewill offering . . . since he was not prepared to recognise that it was in any way legally incumbent upon the monastery of St. Thomas to make such a payment.

The lord lieutenant of Moravia at this time was Baron von Possinger. The difficulty with which he was now faced was considerable. On the one hand Prelate Mendel was one of the most notable personalities in the province von Possinger had to administer, and a high dignitary of the Church. On the other hand, it was essential for the lord lieutenant to maintain the authority of the State, which was threatened by Mendel's resistance. He therefore thought it expedient to refer the whole matter for decision to the Ministry for Public Worship and Education. His report on the affair closes with the following words: "In view of the fact that Abbot Mendel has hitherto invariably displayed strictly loyal and constitutional inclinations, that according to his own assurance to me nothing but what he regards as an inexorable sense of duty

has made him take up what he describes as an absolutely fixed position upon the question of the contribution to the religious fund, and in view of his statement that the monastery cannot really afford to pay more than a small part of the present assessment, I venture to bring the affair to Your Excellency's knowledge, while appending the remark that Abbot Mendel's contention that the law of May 7, 1874, is utterly unconstitutional, seems to be based upon a deplorable condition of mental tension."

We infer from this missive that the lord lieutenant had made a personal attempt to induce the prelate to withdraw from his opposition to a constitutionally passed law. In a constitutionally governed State, parliament and the monarch are mutually supplementary supreme authorities, so that there can be no appeal against laws enacted by parliament and confirmed by the monarch. The success of a rebellion such as Mendel's against a duly accredited law would imply the State authorities' capitulation to an individual.

In view of the possibility that any sort of concession would only be regarded as a weakness, the minister's reply to the lord lieutenant was, therefore, sharply worded. The despatch concluded with the words: "It is obvious that the entirely unbecoming protest against the law of May 7, 1874, cannot possibly induce me to take any measures whereby the enforcement of this law could be suspended. . . . Should the abbot remain recalcitrant, I leave it to Your Excellency to take the necessary legal measures to enforce compliance."

But if the authorities now took a high tone, this served only to make Mendel more stubborn. In January 1876 another demand was made for the payment of the tax. The prelate was warned that in the event of a further refusal, steps would be taken to enforce payment.

On April 24, 1876, the municipality of Brünn issued a distress warrant against the Augustinian monastery. Mendel made a formal protest. In the report from the municipal office to the lord lieutenant we read that the municipality, acting

on the governmental orders in accordance with which the contribution to the religious fund was to be forcibly collected, having tried all milder measures without success, had issued an order for distraint.

Abbot Mendel, however, said the report, had not only refused to provide quarters for the commission of distraint, but had declined to surrender the keys of his strong-boxes, to hand over his books of account, etc., and had entered a protest against the distraint. Physical measures would have been needed to put the warrant in execution, the prelate having declared that the municipal officers would have themselves to take the keys out of his pocket if they wanted to open the cash-box and would have to use force in order to remove any property for sale. As regards the furniture, this seemed to the distraint commission scarcely worth seizing. The best course would be to lay an embargo upon the revenues of the monastery. Reference was also made to the two farms within the jurisdiction of the municipality of Brünn, and to various other matters.

The lord lieutenant now set to work with all possible energy to translate the municipality's suggestions into facts. The documents show that the imposing of an embargo upon the revenues and the sequestration of the estate was actually begun.

On July 23, 1876, Mendel made a further formal protest against these measures, which he had no means of preventing. He concluded his protest with the words: "At the same time I have to declare that the actual carrying out of these proceedings will have the nature of illegal confiscation, and will involve an infringement of the State fundamental law and therefore of the constitution."

The lord lieutenant was not used to being chidden in this way, and he hit back. Within a few days Mendel got a reply in which he was scolded like a naughty schoolboy. Inter alia we read: "Seeing that the royal and imperial lord lieutenancy regards this protest as totally improper, the same must simultaneously declare the utterances contained in the aforesaid

protest to be an extremely regrettable error, with the further remark that the attempt to contest the legal validity of a constitutionally passed law and to represent the measures taken to carry this law into effect as unconstitutional, conflicts grossly with the first and most important duty of a loyal subject, which is to give absolute obedience to the existing laws, and least of all can such conduct be regarded with indifference in the case of the head of a monastery."

The sequestration of the monasterial estate was, therefore, maintained, a certain Anton Petrydes, burgher and town councillor of Wischau, being appointed commissioner of sequestration at a daily salary of fl. 6. Meanwhile every possible attempt was made to bring about a change in Mendel's humour. Councillors Januschka and Klimesch, who were both on the lord lieutenant's staff, were during this period frequent visitors at the monastery, being among those who went regularly to play bowls with the prelate. They put in a word whenever they could to show him that the government was grateful to him for his various services, that there was talk of conferring on him the order of Leopold (the highest Austrian distinction after the order of the Golden Fleece); that perhaps he might even be made a member of the Upper House—if only. . . . Towards these intimations the prelate's attitude was civil—but he seemed rather hard of hearing! Then he was given to understand that not only the lord lieutenant and the minister for public worship and education, but also His Majesty, were indignant about this recalcitrancy, and that there was talk of depriving Mendel of some of his public offices. The only result of these threats was that the prelate was confirmed in his ill-humour, and conceived a grudge against his "friends" attached to the lord lieutenant's office. Certainly the part played by these in the conflict was ambiguous and open to suspicion.

Meanwhile, on August 15, 1876, Mendel once more, for the fourth time, addressed himself to the Ministry for Public Worship and Education. "A contribution to the religious fund

for which the monastery can never expect an equivalent can," he wrote, "be neither ordered nor enforced. . . . The undersigned is glad to take this opportunity of explaining that he would never dream of failing to comply with any instructions from the exalted lord lieutenancy if he could convince himself that such instructions did not imply an infringement of Article 15 of the State fundamental law, the article which concerns the general rights of subjects. As yet, however, the undersigned has not been able to attain to this conviction."

In Minister Stremayer's answer, sent to the lord lieutenancy in Brünn three months later, no attempt is made to produce the requisite conviction in the prelate's mind. The despatch concludes as follows: "Since the only purpose of the memorial is to contest the validity of the law of May 7, 1874, the lord lieutenant had better inform the abbot that he is serving the interests of his monastery very little when, instead of confining himself to reasonable protests, he enters upon an utterly futile polemic against an unquestionably valid law."

Since neither party to the dispute would try to understand the other, there was a deadlock. Mendel begged for an explanation of the validity of the law. He opined that the law of May 7, 1874, conflicted with the State fundamental law; and he also believed ("wrongly, no doubt") that not even parliament was entitled to pass acts conflicting with the State fundamental law. The government rejoined that it would be conceding too much if it were to enter into a discussion with an individual citizen as to the validity of a law passed in due form and properly sanctioned, and that the utmost it could do was to permit the abbot an appeal against the method of enforcement.

The upshot of this correspondence was that Mendel grew more and more embittered in his belief that the government and his enemies (among whom he now came to number many whom he had formerly regarded as his friends) were doing him and the monastery a grievous injustice. The tenacity of his resistance was indicated by his informing the lord lieutenancy that in the account books of the monastery he was charging-

up against the government 5 % interest upon the value of all sequestrated funds—and that he regarded the State as a debtor who would have in due time to repay him this money with the accrued interest. This offending document was returned to him (such being the fashion in German-speaking lands) with an "instruction" to the effect that he would have to put up with the sequestration and all its disagreeable consequences so long as he continued his unseemly opposition to a perfectly valid law.

The next year passed by without a further protest, but without any change in the situation. At a meeting held in October 1877 under the presidency of the lord lieutenant, Councillor Januschka reported on the affair. The minute runs as follows: "Inasmuch as, thanks to the sequestration, all the dues of the monastery have now been paid, it would be possible to suspend the sequestration if only the prelate would declare himself willing to pay in future. Councillor Januschka has consequently applied to Mendel, but the latter declares that nothing will induce him to abandon his standpoint. The only possible course, therefore, is to continue the sequestration, although to a restricted extent."

The renewed intervention of the lord lieutenancy stimulated Mendel to a further advance in his campaign. In his fifth "memorial" or "request" (which reads more like an indictment) he wrote: "The phrase 'sequestration of the revenues' or 'sequestration of the sources of income' can in this case only be regarded as euphemisms for 'an embargo upon or confiscation of the revenues or sources of income.' Incontestably the property of the monastery enjoys the protection given by Article 15 of the State fundamental law, the article concerning the personal rights of subjects—so long as this article itself remains constitutionally valid. That is shown indisputably by the wording of the article in question: "Every legally recognised church or religious organisation . . . shall order and administer its internal affairs independently, and shall, for the purposes of worship, education, and beneficence, remain in possession and

enjoyment of its institutions, foundations, and funds, being, however, like every organisation, subject to the general laws of the State." Mendel went on to say that the lord lieutenancy had itself informed him that the above-mentioned contribution to the religious fund had now been paid, and even overpaid. Yet, in spite of this, the sequestration was continued. Replying, the lord lieutenancy pointed out that before beginning the sequestration it had sent a government official to Mendel: "But inasmuch as Your Reverence expressly declared his intention of persisting in his previous attitude of obstinate refusal to pay the legal due to the religious fund, the sequestration must be maintained to the requisite degree, and its maintenance would appear to be fully justified."

The statement of grievances which had been rejected by the lord lieutenancy was once more referred by Mendel to the Ministry for Public Worship and Education. The document had to be sent by way of the lord lieutenancy, and was there submitted to Councillor Januschka (Mendel's sometime friend and guest) for a formal opinion, which was to accompany it to the minister. Januschka wrote: "I venture to think that the continuance of the sequestration was not merely justified but was rendered necessary by Prelate Mendel's obstinate persistence in his standpoint, for otherwise the payment of the next levy could not be assured, seeing that Prelate Mendel could take advantage of a temporary suspension of the sequestration to collect the rent of the farms for years in advance, thus the seizure of the rents would be made wellnigh impossible; and, besides, the monastery would thereby be preserved from further loss, inasmuch as it would be freed from the payment of interest upon arrears. I therefore humbly advise the rejection of the prelate's memorial." Acting on this opinion, the ministry rejected Mendel's application.

In this contest, Mendel had little luck with his friends. His brethren at St. Thomas, more self-seeking than he but less consistent, had to begin with spurred him on to the fight, but they had long since come to the conclusion that the interests

of the monastery would be better suited by compliance with the unwelcome law. Now and again some of them would drop remarks to this effect, which mortified the prelate without affecting his attitude. One after another the heads of the other monasteries, though at first they had all joined in Mendel's protest, had yielded and "gone to Canossa"—securing rebates and mitigations by taking, in the end, this conciliatory line. As for his friends in the lord lieutenant's office, although they still came to play bowls at the monastery now and again, and although relations were outwardly civil, Mendel had long since ceased to feel any confidence in them; and they, on their side, were delighted that (under the cloak of official secrecy, the bureaucrat's "cap of invisibility") they had been able to make this obstinate priest feel the power of the State—their own power, in a word. The struggle had made Mendel very lonely.

Towards the close of 1878, he sent another protest to the lord lieutenant's office. In his view, he wrote, the law could only apply to the regular clergy whose income was State property, but never to the Augustinian monastery, since this was a foundation and must be regarded as private property. His increasing bitterness was manifested by the threat that the monastery would cut off all its subscriptions to societies and contributions to charitable bodies, and that he proposed to make known to the public how unjustly the State was treating the community of St. Thomas. The lord lieutenancy was unruffled. In its reply of February 26, 1879, it declared that the prelate was welcome to publish all the documents relating to the affair, for their publication could only serve to show how extraordinary and unwarranted was the opposition of the monastery which, standing alone in the realm in its opposition to a properly passed law, would certainly incur universal condemnation.

Three times during this year 1879 (on April 10th, May 27th, and July 5th) did Mendel renew his protest, sending in memorials to the lord lieutenancy, all of them reiterating

the old arguments and countered by the old rejoinders. To the authorities the "Mendel affair" was becoming insufferably tedious.

Throughout 1880 there was no change in the position. The estate of Neu-Hwiezdlitz was still sequestrated; the rents of the Drnowitz sugar-factory and of the dairy-farms at Deutsch-Malkowitz and Tschechen were still being collected and impounded by the State. A sum of more than fl. 2000, interest on debts owing to the monastery, was also pocketed by the authorities. Again and again was the prelate informed that the sequestration would be suspended as soon as the tax was voluntarily paid. Again and again did Mendel enter a protest, and announce that he was booking up 5 % interest against the State on all the moneys thus wrongfully sequestrated.

Nor was there any change in the position during the year 1881. On January 7, 1882, however, Ignatz Mendel,[1] tenant of the Deutsch-Malkowitz dairy-farm, was served with a distress warrant because he had failed to pay over to the district office at Wischau the sequestrated rent due to the religious fund. Because of this non-payment, the warrant informed him, fifty of his bullocks would be seized, and these animals were actually seized three days later. In the archives relating to the matter there is a written opinion by the finance procurator to the effect that the seizure was illegal, for the distress warrant could only apply to the actual property of the monastery, and the tenant farmer had been misled by the prelate's assurance that the State had no right to demand the money.

Towards the end of the month, Mendel sent to the lord lieutenancy a protest against the distraint levied on the tenant of the Deutsch-Malkowitz dairy-farm, appending thereto a detailed discussion of the legal and historical reasons for

[1] Ignatz Mendel was a Jew, and was not related to Gregor Mendel. Fault had been found with the prelate for letting one of the monastery farms to a Jew! Gregor Mendel, however, was too liberal-minded and tolerant a priest to pay any heed to such criticism.

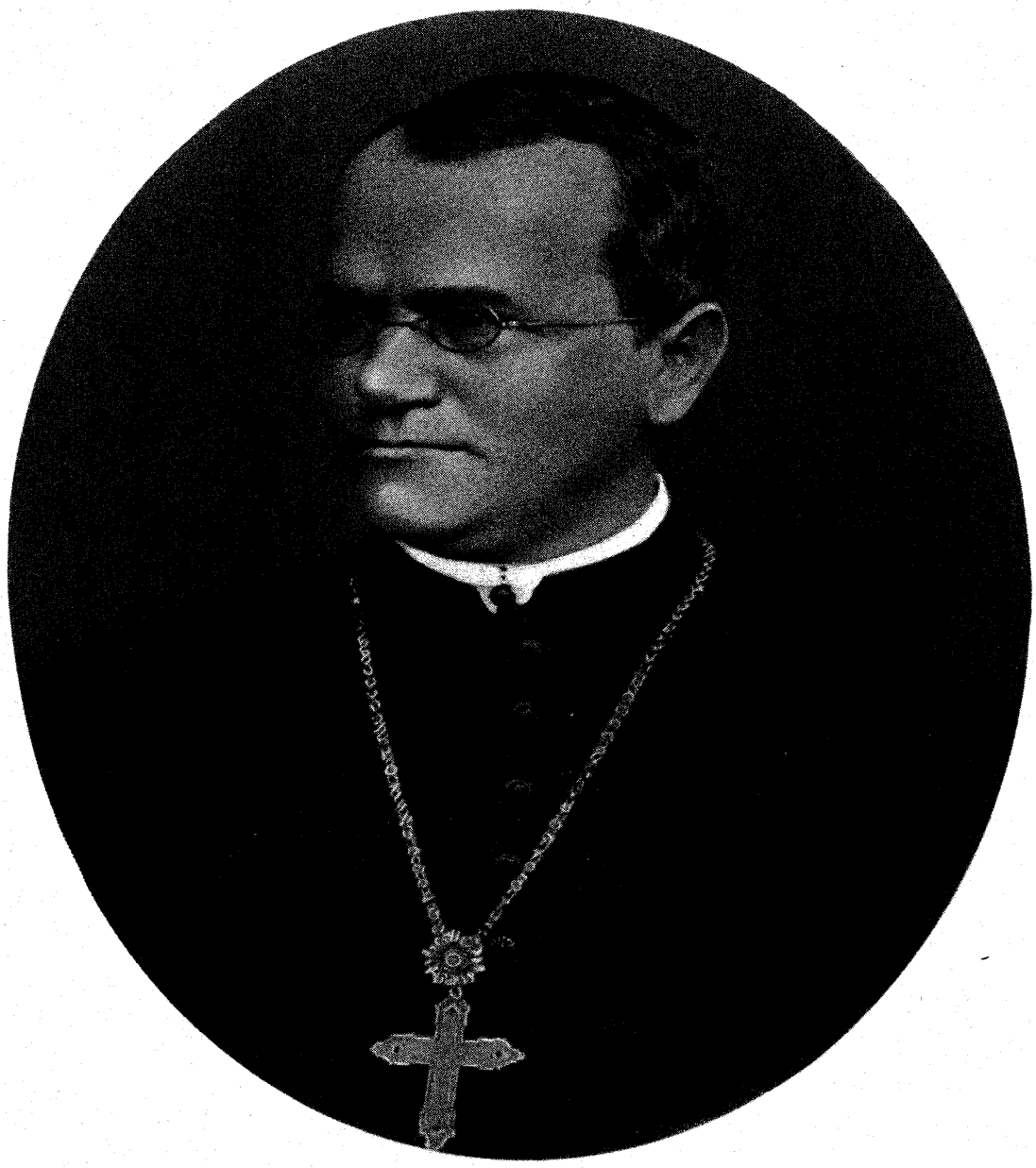

Plate X. The "Great Prelate Portrait"
reproduced from a Picture in the Moravian Mortgage Bank

regarding the religious fund tax as unwarranted. Contributions to the religious fund, he said, were private and not public obligations. The Catholic Church was not a State Church, and was dependent upon its own financial resources. For this reason, according to the constitution, the provision of its financial resources could not be a State affair. The State, when it administered the religious fund of the Catholic Church, did so only as curator and not as public legislator. Now it was a fact that the monasteries had paid contributions to the religious fund before the enactment of the law now in dispute. Historical considerations showed, however, that no obligation to pay such contributions could be deduced from this. In the previous century, taxation of the Moravian monasteries had taken the form of contributions for ecclesiastical purposes (subsidia ecclesiastica). By the royal decree of April 6, 1788, this tax had been commuted for the payment of a lump sum by the monasteries to the religious fund, then recently established. That tax had been fully justified, and had been analogous to the so-called "dominical tax" which the owners of other large estates had had to pay. Unfortunately during the reign of Leopold II, in addition to the aforesaid payment in the lump, the dominical tax was imposed upon the Moravian monasteries. By the royal decree of April 29, 1791, a pledge was given that they should be freed from one or other of these contributions; but, owing to the confusion that ensued during the war with France, this pledge was never fulfilled. After this legal and historical excursus, Mendel went on to say: "Very significant is the fact that the right reverend bishop of Brünn has twice endeavoured to induce the undersigned to make a return of the amount of the allowances paid to the inmates of the monastery of St. Thomas. In both cases the undersigned found it necessary to refuse. . . . It certainly remains difficult if not impossible to understand what right the bishops can arrogate to themselves in this matter of a statement concerning the allowances, seeing that they have absolutely no jurisdiction in the affair nor any concern with the administration or expendi-

ture of the income of the monastery. Like other monasteries, the monastery of St. Thomas enjoys an exempt position, and does not form part of any episcopal diocese." We see that Mendel takes as strong and consistent a line against the dignitaries of the Church as he had taken against the State authorities. The bishop had wanted, probably on the instigation of the lord lieutenant or of the conventuals, to be informed concerning the total amount paid in the way of allowances to the prelate and to the conventuals. Since this sum would have been deducted (as necessary expenses) from the income of the monastery before assessing it for taxation, the return thus asked for would have led to a considerable reduction in the assessment—and perhaps, if Mendel had increased the allowance to the conventuals, to a full remission of the tax. In that case the contest would have become unmeaning—but Mendel, probably guessing what was afoot, and fighting for a principle, would not yield.

Once more, of course, the memorial was rejected. "According to the law of May 7, 1875, all the religious communities without exception have to contribute to the religious fund to the extent established by law."

Following his usual practice, Mendel turned once more with his rejected memorial to the Ministry for Public Worship and Education. The authorities there had got used to these bombardments at regular intervals, and no great excitement seems to have been aroused in Vienna by the exceptionally vigorous style of the latest memorial—a style which reminds the reader a little of that of Abraham a Sancta-Clara. The essential contention of the memorial is worded as follows: "The undersigned holds that the law intended to levy contributions only from those who stood in a reciprocal relation to the religious fund, who, that is to say, might in certain cases draw something from the fund. This does not apply to the monastery of St. Thomas. True, before the law came into operation the monastery had made a small contribution to the religious fund, amounting to fl. 840. But by the royal

decree of April 29, 1791, the monastery had been relieved from any legal obligation in this respect, so that there was no legal justification for the tax. . . . In this respect, therefore, enforcement of the before-mentioned paragraphs would imply a public and grave onslaught on the monastery, would signify a robbery, a positive confiscation of the monasterial property on behalf of an alien fund. . . . The abbot of the monastery, who is also the administrator of its property, would be reduced to the position of a salaried servant of the religious fund." After referring to Article 5 of the State fundamental law, which guaranteed the inviolability of property as a part of the general rights of subjects, Mendel went on to say: "One thing must certainly be regarded as beyond dispute, that in a constitutional State there can be only one morality as regards the matter of mine and thine." The authorities had given up the hope of inducing the stubborn prelate to withdraw his opposition. They had, indeed, come to regard Mendel's behaviour as morbid, believing the incessant protests and statements of grievances to be manifestations of litigious mania. Whisperings to the same effect were even current in the monastery of St. Thomas. Rumour declared that the bishop had deputed Pater Augustin Kratky to keep close though inconspicuous watch over Mendel. It need hardly be said that the value of the monasterial property had been reduced by the long-lasting sequestration. Among the conventuals there was now a faction of malcontents, led (so Mendel believed) by Rambousek who had been his fellow novice and was destined to succeed him as prelate. Mendel had long since withdrawn from association with the excellencies and councillors attached to the lord lieutenancy. Now he began to hold aloof from the conventuals, confiding only in one or two of them, such as Pater Clemens Janetschek, a novice. During the last years of his life he grew more frank than ever before in his conversations with his nephews Alois and Ferdinand Schindler. Not infrequently he complained to them that he was being persecuted, that there was a plan to send him to a lunatic asylum, and even that there were threats against his

life.[1] It is likely enough that the unceasing friction of the "struggle for the right," and his feeling that malice was animating his opponents outside the monastery and his critics within its walls, may have actually induced a pathological irritability. But as to real mental disorder, Dr. Alois Schindler (at that time well advanced in his medical studies), who had ample opportunities of studying his uncle at close quarters, thinks that there is no evidence of the development of anything of the kind. Mendel's family history was free from psychopathic taint, there having been no sign even of eccentricity in any of his relatives, near or remote. He was not, as has sometimes been said, insane or near it during the last years of his life; but these years were certainly clouded by sorrow and bitterness, were overshadowed by gloom.

On May 4, 1883, Mendel sent another protest (the last) to the lord lieutenancy, shorter and more cursory than those which had preceded it. Still, in this last utterance on the question, he stuck to his guns, writing: "As to this demand, the undersigned ventures to rejoin that he does not recognise any legal obligation upon the monastery of St. Thomas to pay such a contribution, and that he has never acknowledged liability."

In June 1883 the lord lieutenancy, acting on instructions from the Ministry of Public Worship and Education, applied once more to the bishop of Brünn requesting the latter to intercede with Mendel, in the hope that the state of sequestration, needless and inconvenient, might be brought to an end.

The proposed intervention never took place. Mendel fell sick, and his illness soon became so severe that he was compelled to entrust all business matters to Pater Ambros Poje, the procurator of the monastery. His earnest desire to survive until the day came when the government would be forced to repeal the obnoxious law was not destined to be fulfilled. He was to be succeeded by one who held different views of right

[1] See Dr. Alois Schindler's Memorial Speech on Prelate Gregor Johann Mendel, 1902.

and wrong, justice and injustice, legality and illegality, and who would capitulate where he would have gone on fighting.

On July 1, 1883, Pater Poje returned a demand note to the lord lieutenancy with a letter to the effect that the prelate was too ill to be troubled about the matter at this juncture. He enclosed a medical certificate under date June 30, 1883, to the effect that the undersigned (Dr. Brenner) was "treating Prelate Mendel for organic heart disease and general dropsy, conditions in which perfect repose is essential, and all emotional disturbance must be avoided."

In a memorial to the ministry under date September 13, 1883, the procurator reported that the prelate was dangerously ill, and that the demand for payment could not be laid before Mendel without gravely imperilling his health. On the other hand, though he (Poje) must maintain his chief's position, he does not venture to enclose a protest against the order to pay. He begs that the time during which a protest can be made shall be extended for the duration of the prelate's illness. These qualms of conscience which had led the procurator to express a wish to maintain the prelate's standpoint as long as the latter was alive do not seem to have been lasting, for barely a week later (on September 17th) he sent a protest against the amount of the assessment, and this protest lodged with the Ministry of Public Worship and Education implied a recognition of the validity of the law! The procurator reminded the ministry that in Prelate Mendel's return on which the assessment had originally been based, the personal property of the monastery had been stated at fl. 289,000 and the real property at fl. 429,480; in all, fl. 727,480. Subsequently the total had been raised to fl. 787,160. The procurator asked that, in accordance with the law, the sums representing the value of the library, art treasures, pensions, etc., etc., amounting in all to fl. 171,984, should be written off the total. Two months later, Count Schönborn, the minister for public worship and education, replying to this request, says that not only shall the proposed reduction be made, but that it shall be retrospective,

being allowed for in respect of all past assessments. Thus the repentant sinners have been received back into grace.

I shall give only a very brief sketch of the subsequent development of this affair. Mendel died on January 6, 1884. A fortnight later, the monastery of St. Thomas lodged a detailed and carefully documented protest against the amount of the assessment of its liabilities to the religious fund, begging for a reduction on the ground that the value of the library, the art treasures, etc., had been included for taxable purposes, and that the value of these was much less than had been implied in the return. Here is an extract from the memorial: "Thanks to the numerous memorials and protests of the late Abbot Gregor Mendel, the Royal and Imperial Ministry for Public Worship and Education is well aware of the views the abbot held in respect of the contribution to the religious fund. Although these views as regards the law of May 7, 1874, must be admitted to have been erroneous, they are explained and excused, on the one hand, by the unusual severity and magnitude of the assessment to the religious fund, to an amount which was quite beyond the means even of a well-to-do monastery like this, and, on the other hand, by the deceased's well-known sense of justice which continually strengthened him in the hope that the law of May 7, 1874 (whose provisions he found it impossible to reconcile with the State fundamental law) would be repealed, and that the sums levied by distraint under that law would be restored to the monastery." Shortly afterwards, a further memorial was despatched to the ministry begging that the monastery of St. Thomas should be entirely freed from liability to contribute to the religious fund for the decade 1881–1890. The lord lieutenant endorsed this request, supporting it by a formal opinion from his accountant's department, to the following effect: "If the deductions already approved by the ministry are made, the monastery has taxable property amounting to fl. 748,048, upon which the contribution to the religious fund would be fl. 7018. Now, according to the income-tax return from the monastery, its income amounts to fl. 12,827,

whereas the allowances to the prelate and the conventuals for the year 1881 amounted to fl. 13,375, and for the year 1882 to fl. 13,483, so that there is a deficit. It seems desirable, therefore, that the monastery should be freed from liability to contribute to the religious fund for the ten-year period 1881–1890. But for this decade the monastery of St. Thomas has already paid the sum of fl. 181,816, and has been in addition credited with a contribution amounting to fl. 2576, so that, if our recommendation be adopted, the State will have to repay to the monastery a gross amount of fl. 21,383."

It would seem, however, that the ministry must have rejected this application, on the ground that the legal time allowed for a protest had elapsed before it had been sent in; for when, shortly afterwards, a petition for indulgence in this matter of the time limit was addressed directly to the emperor, it was rejected "in view of the attitude adopted by Prelate Mendel."

But the chapter of the monastery was not prepared to let matters rest there. Two years later another memorial was sent to the ministry, pointing out that the high assessment of the monastery's contribution to the religious fund had been made in the absence of any knowledge of the income of the institution, because it had never been possible to induce Prelate Mendel to make a return of income. The net income for the years 1881 to 1886 had been fl. 14,181. From this had to be deducted allowances amounting to fl. 5000 for the prelate, fl. 1500 for the prior, fl. 1200 for the incumbent, fl. 4200 for six priests, and fl. 3500 for six priests and clerics, amounting in all to fl. 15,400—so that there was a deficit, and no income available for taxation. The monastery had, therefore, been overtaxed, and a return of the excess payment was asked for. The accountant's department at the lord lieutenancy endorsed the request, stating that, according to the now known income of the monastery of St. Thomas, for the years 1881 and 1882 the amounts payable to the religious fund should be fl. 806 and fl. 698, respectively, making fl. 1504 in all, whereas for the subsequent years, deducting the allowances to the prelate and

the conventuals from the income, no contribution would be payable. Since, however, the monastery of St. Thomas had already paid the sum of fl. 18,186 for the years 1881 to 1884, whilst according to the previous calculations of the department during the ten-year period 1870 to 1880 the tax had been overpaid to the amount of fl. 2576, it resulted that, allowing for a necessary deduction of fl. 1516, a total sum of fl. 19,876 should be refunded to the monastery, which would have to give a stamped receipt for the amount. By this recommendation, the trouble which had been going on for more than ten years, was brought to a close amid general satisfaction. By a ministerial decree under date July 26, 1886, the return of the beforementioned sum was ordered, and the monastery of St. Thomas was declared exempt from the tax for the remainder of the decade. By a subsequent ministerial decree this exemption was extended to the following decade, 1891–1900. The law, however, has not been repealed. It is still on the statute-book, and in 1921 (as I am informed by Councillor Carl Ludwig) in virtue of its provisions contributions to the religious fund were levied from certain will-to-do parish priests. The Moravian monasteries, however, are for practical purposes exempt from taxation owing to the deductions from income made for allowances to their inmates, so that no "taxable income" remains. While submitting to the tax as a matter of principle, the religious foundations succeed in evading it.

The upshot was, then, that the government maintained its prestige while the monastery kept its money. Both sides were well pleased, and the only sufferer had been the man of gentle disposition, crushed betwixt the hammer and the anvil in a struggle for what he believed to be right. Enough said concerning this unhappy dispute. As I have shown, Mendel's election as prelate, forcing him into a public career, was enough, by itself, to put an end to his scientific work. But it was the "struggle for the right," waged by him throughout with perfect sincerity, which estranged him from many he had deemed his friends and embittered his declining years.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

DECLINING YEARS

IT would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that, in the closing years of his life, Mendel became soured by his dispute with the government, that he was personally gloomy or unsociable. Towards the poor, and towards all whom he believed to be loyal, he was as kindly disposed as ever. But, more than this, down to the very end of his illness his taste for cheerful society was undiminished. On Sundays and feast-days, from three to seven in the afternoon, a cheerful company would assemble at the bowling alley in the monastery garden, for the most part officials of high standing, Mendel's regular guests. Among these may be mentioned Captain General Count Vetter von der Lilie, Councillors Januschka, Klimesch, and Ruber, attached to the lord lieutenant's office, Dr. Scharrer, president of the supreme court of Moravia, Schilda and Strobach, councillors in the same court, Herr Pieta, manager of the State lottery, Professor Rost of Brünn Modern School, and others. When they played bowls, it was always for love, not for money. After the trouble about the tax question became intensified, however, these gatherings were no longer possible, so Mendel used to spend Sunday afternoon playing chess with his nephews, or talking to them about the old home in Silesia.

All the acquaintances made in happier days, and especially his sometime pupils, were welcome visitors during these last years. In the summer of 1882, Professor Liznar and his wife came to Brünn, in search of Mendel's records concerning variations in the level of the subsoil water. Mendel invited the pair to stay at the monastery. They had their early coffee in the prelate's sitting-room, and the mid-morning snack in the garden beside the beehouse. The guests had (midday) dinner and supper in the refectory, but Mendel was not

present on these occasions, excusing himself on the ground that he had to make meteorological observations which he could not trust Josef to do by deputy. The Liznars stayed a week in the prelacy.

The bees, says Liznar, were still a delight to Mendel, and his favourite topic of conversation. Mendel told the Liznars that it was his custom in the spring, when the bees began to emerge, to lay his hand on the board over which they crawled before taking flight, and that after this they never attempted to sting him at any time during the year. Attached to the hives was a wire cage in which there were bees. When Frau Liznar asked what this was for, Mendel replied jestingly: "There are some drones and a queen in that cage. The queen is choosing a proper husband, for it is just as unfortunate among bees as it is among human beings when a good woman is mated to a bad man." It would seem from this that he must still have been engaged in his hybridisation experiments on bees. Mendel, says Liznar, was certainly rather depressed during this visit, but, it would seem, not so much on account of the tax dispute as because of failing health. As concerns the former, however, he said to Liznar: "I promised my conventuals to keep the property of the monastery intact, and I shall abide by my word." Still, the general impression left upon Liznar by this visit is that there was absolutely no ground for regarding the prelate as mentally disordered.

Liznar was a pupil who carried on Mendel's work along one line at least, that of meteorology. We learn from a letter from Mendel to Liznar, written only a fortnight before Mendel's death, that Liznar's publications upon this topic gave him great pleasure. The writer recognises that death is impending, but avoids sentimentalism about the matter. His tone is, indeed, one of manly resignation, but humorous as well. It is dated "Brünn, December 20, 1883," and runs as follows:

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Above all please accept my heartfelt thanks for the various writings of your own you have sent me from time to time, and for which I have not always expressed my gratitude in particular instances.

"You are now entering upon the years of most active work, whereas I must be said to be in the opposite condition. To-day I have found it necessary to ask to be completely excused further meteorological observations, for since last May I have been suffering from heart trouble, which is now so severe that I can no longer take the readings of the meteorological instruments without assistance.

"Since we are not likely to meet again in this world, let me take this opportunity of wishing you farewell, and of invoking upon your head all the blessings of the meteorological deities.

"Best wishes to yourself and to your wife.

"GREGOR MENDEL."

The sick man's best friends during this last illness were his two nephews, who were devoted to him. Alois, the elder, had for some years now been studying medicine at Vienna University. The younger, Ferdinand, was at Brünn High School until 1883, when he, likewise, went to Vienna. I publish two letters, the first written both to Alois and Ferdinand, the second to Alois alone. The first, under date April 4, 1883, runs as follows:

"MY DEAR DOCTORS IN SPE!

"Anticipating that you will so soon be returning home by way of Brünn, I am not this time sending you a postal remittance to Vienna. You see, then, that I am confidently expecting you, but it would be as well that you should let me have a postcard the day before your arrival.

"I suppose you have both been in Arcady during these

lovely March days! The weather has been just as bad in Brünn. My servant Josef declares that he has been watching the March violets blooming on our noses, which have been purple with the cold. Only once during the last thirty-nine years, namely in 1845, was the average temperature lower, so this year 1883 ranks as the thirty-eighth.

"I need some grafting shoots. Would you be good enough to ask Alois Sturm for them in my name? I want him to send me one from the Günsbirne [a pear-tree], two from the Quaglich [another pear-tree], and three from the good apple-tree in the reservation garden. I shall be glad to make returns in kind.

"With warmest greetings and kisses,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"GREGOR."

The second letter, the one to Alois, is dated December 26, 1883, and was therefore penned only a few days before Mendel's death. He can still write in a humorous vein, though he does not blink the seriousness of his condition, and expresses a wish that he could talk over "an important professional matter" with his nephew—the medical student.

"DEAR ALOIS,

"I gather from Ferdinand that you are one of those against whom summary proceedings can be taken, condemning you to spend the latter part of the festive season at Brünn. That will be all right, provided you give me two days' notice of your intention to come to prison here. But compulsion will have to be exercised if you don't come voluntarily.

"As to my personal feelings in the matter, certainly I have no objection to your coming, especially this time, when I want so much to talk over an important professional matter with you.

"Much love to Ferdinand, who has my best wishes for the

dissection and all the rest of it in which his Christmastide will be fully occupied this year.

"Hoping that you will very soon turn up at your old familiar prison here,

"I am always your affectionate uncle,

"GREGOR."

When we recall the dryness of Mendel's usual epistolary style, we can read between the lines of the foregoing letter how strong was the lonely man's desire to talk about life, illness, perhaps death, with one of the few whom he still trusted to the full. I learn from Dr. Alois Schindler that at that time in Vienna he was attending Professor Bamberger's lectures upon internal medicine. He had been greatly impressed by these lectures, and had told his uncle about them. Mendel had already asked him how Bamberger treated kidney disease and heart trouble. No doubt this was the "important professional matter" he wanted to talk over with his nephew.

His illness had been of very gradual onset. He suffered from chronic kidney disease, which had begun several years before his death, had perhaps been aggravated by the mortifications of the dispute with the government, but was presumably for the most part the outcome of hereditary predisposition. During the last years before his death, his pulse was always unduly frequent. His nephews had often counted 120 beats per minute. Apart from worry and from the arterial and cardiac degeneration attendant on the kidney disease, chronic nicotine poisoning may have been an accessory factor. Mendel had become a heavy smoker, in part from taste, and in part because one of his doctors had told him that this would help to keep down his fat. The cigars he smoked were not very strong ones, but he would get through as many as twenty of them per day. Even after his heart had begun to trouble him a great deal, he would not hear of cutting off his tobacco altogether.

He caught a chill during an excursion to Raigern in the

spring of 1883, and had to take to his bed for a time. In the summer of the same year he went to Roznau, a spa in Eastern Moravia, where his nephews paid him a visit. The change of air and the treatment did him good for a time, but in the autumn he grew worse. General dropsy set in owing to the failure of the heart and the kidneys, so that he could no longer get about. The end came from uraemia. About his own illness, as in respect of other matters, he wanted truth rather than illusion. Dr. Alois Schindler writes to me: "I believe that my uncle was one of the very few who contemplate death stoically as a natural necessity." He had, however, a dread of premature burial, for which reason, and also because he wished the nature of his illness to be put beyond doubt, he had exacted a pledge that a post-mortem examination should be performed.

"As late as Friday, January 4th," we read in a report concerning Mendel's death, "he was occupied in scientific studies, and dictated the result of his meteorological observations. During that same morning, however, his heart trouble became so greatly aggravated that his doctors lost all hope of any improvement. He breathed his last on Sunday, January 6, 1884, at about two o'clock in the morning." A notice in the Brünn "Tagesbote" concludes with the words: "His death deprives the poor of a benefactor, and mankind at large of a man of the noblest character, one who was a warm friend, a promoter of the natural sciences, and an exemplary priest." Alois Schindler was present at the post-mortem examination, which was performed by Dr. Brenner. The findings were chronic inflammation of the kidneys (morbus Brightii) as the primary disease, with hypertrophy of the heart as a complication. There was no valvular disease, nor any anomaly in the brain.

The announcement of his death, which had been drafted by Mendel himself, ran as follows:

"The Augustinian monastery of St. Thomas at Altbrünn

in Moravia respectfully and with profound regret informs the public of the death of the Right Reverend Abbot

GREGOR JOH. MENDEL,

mitred prelate, companion of the Royal and Imperial Order of Francis Joseph, emeritus chairman of the Moravian Mortgage Bank, member and one of the founders of the Austrian Meteorological Society, member of the Royal and Imperial Moravian and Silesian Agricultural Society, and various other learned and useful organisations, etc., etc. Born at Heinzendorf in Eastern Silesia on July 22, 1822. After a long, severe, and painful illness, having received the holy sacrament and having submitted himself to the will of the Most High, he departed this life at half-past one in the morning of January 6th.

"The funeral ceremony will take place at the monastery church on January 9th at nine in the morning, and thereafter the body of the deceased will be conveyed to the Brünn central cemetery for the last rest.

"R.I.P.

"BRÜNN, MONASTERY OF ST. THOMAS
"*January 6th*, 1884."

A huge concourse of mourners attended the funeral train from the monastery church to the Brünn central cemetery, where Mendel's body lies in the monasterial burial plot, which is close to the north-eastern corner of the enclosure. Apart from the "representatives of governmental authority" with whom Mendel had so often crossed lances during the last ten years of his life, many other notables were present: professors, teachers, members of the Catholic clergy, but also the Protestant pastor and the Jewish rabbi, representatives of the numerous societies in which Mendel had worked and to which he had subscribed, deputies from the Heinzendorf fire brigade, and so on, and so on—but above all, many of

the poor, to whom he had always been so kindly and so helpful, often enough their only refuge in time of trouble. But though hundreds realised that they had lost a good friend, and hundreds more came as in duty bound or from curiosity to witness the interment of a dignitary, not a single one of those present on the occasion knew that a great scientific investigator, a man of imperishable reputation had passed away.

The death even of a great man seldom leaves an obvious gap in the world, and the place of a member of an established organisation is soon filled. The Augustinians elected a new prelate, and few of them mourned the old one long. Among the exceptions, however, was the novice Pater Clemens, who penned two Latin couplets aptly characterising Johann Gregor Mendel. They run as follows:

Clemens ac largus, affabilis unicuique,
Fraternusque pater fratribus nobis fuit.
Flores amavit et juris defensor vim toleravit,
Qua tandem fessus, vulnere cordis obit.

[Gentle, free-handed, kindly to one and all,
Both brother and father to us brethren was he.
Flowers he loved, and as a defender of the law
he held out against injustice,
Whereby at length worn out he died from a
wound of the heart.]