

GENETICS

Mendel Shrine Wrecked

One bomb destroyed a part of the monastery in Brno, Czechoslovakia, where priceless mementoes of the great geneticist were kept.

► ONE SHELL—whether German or Russian nobody knows—made a wreck of the Mendel shrine in the monastery in Brno, Czechoslovakia, where priceless mementoes of the great geneticist were kept. Other, equally priceless Mendeliana, especially the manuscripts that were the foundation-stones of modern genetics, were stolen by the Nazis from the archives of the Natural History Society, before which Mendel first presented the results of his researches. It is known that these were paraded around Germany, but what has become of them has not yet been found out.

This story of disaster to the relics of Gregor Mendel is told in the *Journal of Heredity* by Hugh Iltis, a science student at the University of Tennessee, who was for a time with the U. S. Army of Occupation in Germany. Mr. Iltis' father, Prof. Hugo Iltis of Mary Washington College, was a native of Brno, and has devoted years of study to the life and works of Mendel. So when opportunity offered, the younger Iltis made a journey to Brno to see for himself what had happened to the city and to the monastery where Mendel had once raised his little garden of very important peas and where he subsequently ruled as abbot.

The city had been pretty severely battered during the last days of the war, though it is now patiently being rebuilt. At first sight nothing seemed amiss with

the monastery, but Mr. Iltis soon learned otherwise. Only one shell had hit the entire large structure—but it had crashed right into the room where the Mendel shrine was housed, demolishing practically everything in it and leaving a large hole where wall and roof joined, through which the weather had wrought further mischief.

Elsewhere, both within and outside the monastery, things associated with Mendel were unharmed, save for the looting of the Natural History Society's headquarters. The beautiful white marble statue of the great geneticist that dominates city square dedicated to his memory remains unmarred. A pear tree and an apricot grafted on a plum, both of which Mendel is believed to have planted in the monastery grounds, were in full fruit. The little plot where he worked with his peas was bright with flowers.

The Nazis tried to make much of the German parentage of Gregor Mendel, states Mr. Iltis, even going to the length of issuing a postage stamp with his portrait on it. But he is sure that had Mendel been alive at the time he would have had none of these dubious honors. He feels quite convinced, on Mendel's known record as a stubborn defender of human dignity and rights, that he would have been another German prelate driven into exile or cast into a concentration camp.

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NUCLEAR PHYSICS

Mesotron Photographed

► ONE of the most elusive and mysterious of the subatomic particles, the mesotron (alias meson) has been photographed. The mesotron itself got away, for it lived only a fleet fraction of a second and then disintegrated into two other particles, one a well-known electron and the other either a photon (a glob of light) or a neutrino, a little neutral particle about which little is known.

A team of California Institute of Technology physicists, consisting of Drs. Carl D. Anderson (Nobelist), Raymond V.

Adams, Paul E. Lloyd and R. Ronald Rau, report the photographic feat accomplished in a "cloud-chamber" device aboard a high-flying B-29 cruising nearly six miles above the earth.

The purpose of this subatomic photography, they explain in a report to the *American Physical Society*, (Oct. 15) is to discover the mass and the disintegration products of the mesotron, which is one of the many steps necessary in exploring the changes in matter and energy when cosmic rays bombard the

earth. Mesotrons are created by the powerful cosmic rays and so far man-made radiation has not been powerful enough to duplicate the effect of the cosmic rays.

The Cal. Tech. photographs suggest that the incoming mesotron is about 200 times as massive as the familiar electron and that the neutral particle resulting from its disintegration has a mass 50 to 60 times that of the electron. There is also a hint that there may be neutrally uncharged mesotrons lurking about somewhere in the subatomic picture.

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The lubricating value of *oil* is due to its chemical structure and composition, not to its viscosity.

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