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Aaron Aaronsohn

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BRIEFER ARTICLES

AARON AARONSOHN

(WITH PORTRAIT)

The untimely death of AARON AARONSOHN in an aeroplane accident occurred May 15, 1919. He was on the postal plane from London, and the plane was wrecked in a heavy fog near Boulogne.



AARONSOHN is best known as the discoverer of wild wheat in Palestine, but his training and enthusiasm were expressing themselves in many ways, not only for the benefit of his own people, but also in helping to solve the general problem of food production. He was born in Roumania very shortly before his parents migrated to Palestine. He was educated in France, and then devoted himself to the agricultural problems and other interests of his home country. His discovery of wild wheat in 1906 was not an accident, but the result of a study of the

problem, by which he became convinced that wild wheat would resemble cultivated wheat in appearance and size of grain. He found it growing in rock crevices, and later discovered that it is a relatively common grass throughout Palestine. A drought-resistant and disease-resistant race of wheat fired the imagination of AARONSOHN as to the possibilities of food production. His visits to the United States will always be remembered by those who met him personally or heard his addresses. He traveled throughout the country, investigating the agricultural

conditions, especially in the dry regions, and was convinced that the Palestine wheat would be of great service. Accordingly, in 1909, through the financial support of certain leading Jews in America, there was established in Palestine, at Haifa, the Jewish Agricultural Experiment Station; and in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture the breeding of suitable races of wheat was undertaken. The work of the Station dealt not only with cereals, but also with fruits, and was progressing with remarkable success when it was stopped by the war.

During the war AARONSOHN was absorbed by various activities, and he played an important part in taking General ALLANBY'S command across the desert into Palestine, and much of ALLANBY'S success was due to AARONSOHN'S advice and knowledge of the people and of the condition of the country.

In AARONSOHN'S death, at the age of 42, the science of plant-breeding, especially in its practical application in semiarid regions, has probably lost its most promising investigator.—J. M. C.