

MAHANAIM.

By MAJOR CONDER, R.E.

THIS city, one of the most important and interesting in Gilead, has usually been placed far north at *Birket Mahneh*, but, as I have attempted to show in "Heth and Moab," considerable confusion arises from such an identification (chap. vi, pp. 179-181, 1st edition); and I have proposed, therefore, to seek it much further south, somewhere east of Es Salt. After meeting Laban at Mizpeh (probably *Sáf*), Jacob went on his way to Mahanaim (Gen. xxxii, 2). Thence he went to Penuel (v. 30), and afterwards rejoined his family, which had crossed the Jabbok (v. 22), and journeyed to Succoth (Gen. xxxiii, 17). If, then, Succoth be where Dr. Selah Merrill has shown it to be—at Tell Der'ala, north of the Jabbok—Mahanaim should be sought somewhere south of the same, and near Penuel, which I have proposed to place at Neby Osh'a.

In Joshua xiii, 26-30, Mahanaim appears as the capital of a district, and as the east limit of Gad, as contrasted with "the border of Debir," or "limit of the ridge." It was a city of refuge (Josh. xxi, 38); the refuge of Ishbosheth beyond the "gorge" (*Bithron*), and evidently on the highlands (2 Sam. ii, 8, 12, 29). A man could thence be seen running on a plain, by David, when finding refuge there (2 Sam. xviii, 24-27; cf. 2 Sam. xix, 32; Kings ii, 8), and it was at some distance from the wood of Ephraim, which was beyond Jordan (2 Sam. xviii, 6; cf. xvii, 26). It was not in the same region with Ramoth Gilead (*Reimán*), since it was the capital of another province (1 Kings iv, 14; cf. 1 Chron. vi, 80). Finally, in Canticles (vi, 13), we read of the "company of two armies" (*במחלת המחנים*), which has been variously rendered, "dance of Mahanaim" and "dance of a double choir." The word is thus derived from the root *חול* *חול* "to be round;" (*מחולה*), which is a common geographic term for a circular basin or a "circuit," as, for instance, in the case of Abel Meholah (now *'Ain Helweh*).

The name Mahanaim (*מַחֲנַיִם*) is also geographical, meaning "camp" or "camps" (Gesén); compare the Mahaneh Dan, or "plain of the camp of Dan," near Zorah and Eshtaol. In Arabic it becomes *Mukhmah* (*مخمة*), as in the case of the well-known plain so called near Shechem, and the term would seem to indicate a plain.

On the newly issued map with ancient nomenclature will be found marked, east of Es Salt, the curious depressed plain of circular shape, which is called *El Buki'a*, "the little vale," or, in the vulgar Bedu dialect, *El Bef'a*. This is the position in which I have supposed Mahanaim to lie. A main road from Salt runs on the west side of the plain northwards, which I followed in 1882, going to Jerásh. Here will be found marked the ruin *Mukhmah* (*مخمة*), which appears to me to

preserve, somewhat distorted, the name of Mahanaim. The substitution of *m* for *n* is not a very strong objection, since in Syrian speech these two letters are often interchanged. The plain is several miles across, about 2,000 feet above sea level, with hills from 1,000 to 1,500 feet higher round it. The soil is sandy and fertile, the hills are of limestone. There is an important ancient ruin called *Eṯ Basha*, about a mile to the south with a fine clear spring. The ruins consist of a tower and round arched vaults, such as occur in many other ancient sites in Gilead, but which are probably of the second to fifth century A.D. Here, I think, we may therefore place the long lost Mahanaim, in a fertile district, near Penuel, south of the Jabbok, and east of the woods whence Salt (*Saltus Hieraticus*) took its name. The runners could be seen at some distance on the level road west of the plain, and the "circle" of Mahanaim would be the circle of the curious basin in which it stands. The northern site should be abandoned as not suiting the geographical requisites of the case.

ALTAIC LETTER FROM TELL AMARNA.

By MAJOR CONDER, R.E.

AMONG the 300 letters from Tell Amarna (1500-1450 B.C.) the longest of all is written to Amenophis III, by Dusratta, King of Mitani, or the region immediately east of the Euphrates, opposite the Hittite city of Carchemish. The first seven lines are in Assyrian, but, after this introduction, follow 505 lines in his own language. Dusratta wrote other letters in Assyrian which have been translated, and one of which refers to the same persons, Giliās and Manis, who are mentioned in this letter, of which many paragraphs are fairly well preserved, though others are too much broken to be read. The writing is syllabic, in an old cuneiform character, with a few determinatives.

Although the letter has not been translated, the meanings of a few words have been determined by Dr. Sayce and other scholars, and judging from these words, and from the terminations of verbs and nouns, it appears to me to be clear that the whole is written in a Mongol dialect, akin to the Akkadian and Medic. I am unable to find any resemblance to the Aryan language of the Vannic tribes, nor has Dr. Sayce pointed out any, save a termination which also occurs in Akkadian. The known words are also not the same that stand for the same sense in Vannic. The vocabulary is very large, and great difficulties will no doubt arise in attempting to render the meaning, without the aid of bilinguals, but many of the words at once recall well-known Medic and Akkadian terms, and the same may be said of the commoner terminations.

The Assyrian introduction is much damaged, but the names of Amenophis and of Dusratta have already been recognised, with the