JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE
FROM
India to Siam and Malacca in 1779.
BY DR. J. G. KOENIG.

Translated from his Manuscripts in the British Museum.

Introduction.

Jean Gerard Koenig, a pupil of Linnæus was born, in Livland, in 1728, and made his first expedition to Iceland in 1765, where he discovered the plant Koenigia, which was named after him. In 1768 he travelled to India where he acted as doctor to the Danish Missionaries at Tranquebar and afterwards was appointed Naturalist to the Nabob of Arcot. He was an enthusiastic botanist and imparted so much of his zeal to the European community there, that a botanical society known as the Society of United Brothers was formed. After visiting various parts of India and Ceylon he started on an expedition to Siam and Malacca at the end of 1778, returning to India in 1779. In 1784 he went to Calcutta, and died (June 26, 1785) at Jagrenatporoum.

His collections and manuscripts were bequeathed to Sir Joseph Banks and in due course became a part of the British Museum collections.
The Manuscript account of his travels and observations is included in nineteen quarto volumes, and written in a mixture of antiquated German and Danish in a very bad handwriting, so that its translation is a work of some difficulty. No portion has hitherto been published, but through the kindness of Mr. Carruthers, the Head of the Botanical Department of the British Museum, we have been enabled to obtain a translation of such portions as relate especially to our region. I have added a few footnotes otherwise the translation made by Miss Overbeck has been hardly altered at all. The account commences with the starting of the ship Bristol from Madras on August 8th, 1778, on its way to Siam.

**Journal.**

August 8th, 1778.—After I had overcome many difficulties, good luck favoured me in the end, so that I could prepare myself for a journey to Siam, as well as time would permit.

I started on August the 8th, it was six o'clock in the evening when I went on board the ship Bristol, which was commanded by Captain Leith.

The captain himself arrived an hour later, and ordered the anchors to be hoisted directly, and this was done in clear moonlight, while the wind was breezing up.

9th.—We saw the mountains, called by the sailors the "Paliacatish Mountains" on our left side, they seemed to me to be much smaller and less in number, than when I saw them two years ago, and they are known in the country by the name of "Nazari Mountains." Red Sandalwood* grows on these mountains, and that species of tree is frequently seen, upon which grow the *Myrobalanmus citrina*† both of which I have described two years ago, and sent the description to Europe. After we had passed these mountains, the country grew quite flat, our favourable wind left us towards midday, and a perfect calm caused us to advance but little to-day. Towards evening our favourable wind returned, but feebly as yet, and early on the 10th we saw the mountains of Angola, which seemed to me to be much smaller than the Paliacatish Mountains. The calm was the same as yesterday, however we succeeded in getting

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*Pterocarpus santalinus Linn.*

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into the sea-water, which was rendered turbid by the river Kisna, which circumstance is very peculiar, as it lies more than twelve German miles from the mouth of the above mentioned stream, and more than two miles from the shore. The calm forced my captain towards evening, to cast anchor, on account of the nearness of the land, so that the stream should not drift us in a wrong direction.

11th.—Early to-day, at four o'clock, our captain hoisted anchor again, the wind was favourable but very strong, the atmosphere thick; these circumstances in conjunction caused my captain to feel grave doubts, because there are some sand-banks at this place, and on account of the misty atmosphere the low banks were difficult to recognise. In spite of all this he ordered the sails to be set, and we continued our journey in dull weather and equally dull water. The most interesting thing was to watch how the water of this Kisna stream and the sea-water met. The waves broke one against the other, and especially the fresh water threw the water of the river quivering up, in the shape of fingers, while the salt water, seemed to rise some what higher where it met the fresh water, which was partly caused by the strong wind. After nine o'clock the weather cleared up a little, and the first thing we perceived of the town Massulipatnam was the flag-staff, and a short time after we saw the town itself and the country through a telescope. This was agreeable to us all, because in the case of contrary chances our journey might have been prolonged for days. At two o'clock in the afternoon the anchors were cast in the harbour, two German miles from the town the water having a depth of three fathoms. The distance we were still from land, compelled me to stay on board for the night, and in the evening, when the weather was calm, and only the soft movements of the ship stirred the water I saw some phosphorescent specks, about as big as a small pea surrounded by a luminous ring. These were probably small animals. I tried to catch some of them, at this time however I was unsuccessful.

12th. Early in the morning I went ashore in one of the boats belonging to our ship. The wind was more favourable to me, than it had been to the captain yesterday, and in one and half hour I landed, which same journey had taken the captain five hours yesterday. The sea-water was not half as red as yesterday
but just as muddy, and I could discover nothing on the bottom. There were neither animals nor plants to be seen, and as soon as we came into the mouth of one of the arms of the big river Ksna, its bed was covered with thick brownish mud, which mud increases the nearer one comes to the fortress which is situated on the banks, and almost entirely surrounded by the river.

The fortress Massulipatam, I have been informed lies on a bank of a minor branch of the big stream Ksna, reckoned by the native heathens to be the fourth in the order of holy streams, which are altogether seven in number, the Ganges being the first, . . . . the second, the Cadahverhi* the third, then the above mentioned Ksna stream, after this Kangiret, the Collorham† and as the last the Caveri, but in reality the latter is only a branch of the Collorham, which divides a few English miles from the fortress Tirutphinapalli.‡

Neither time nor circumstance permit me to enter into any details concerning the superstition of the Indian nation as regards these streams, except this only that it is considered a great happiness to have bathed in one of these streams, because it is said to secure future happiness, and if their burnt bones are thrown into these streams, a great benefit for the soul is derived from it. Therefore many of their chiefs, who have enough money are brought hither in urns from a great distance and with certain ceremonies, either by the Brahmin or their own relations.

I could not look about very much to-day, because in crossing from the ship to the shore, all my clothes got wet as the waves are very strong and towering at the mouth of the river; only in the afternoon I went over the ramparts of the fortress with one of my friends, Mr. D. Campbell, whom I met here quite unexpectedly. This fortress was newly constructed seven years ago by one of the best engineers, Major Steevensen. It used to be a French fortress, but was taken from them late one evening by the English. The French commander at that time was Mr. Confless, brother of the well known admiral. There exist still many ridiculous anecdotes hereabouts, which do little credit to the French. Now the fortifications consist in a deep trench filled

* Godavery
† Kalerun
‡ Trichinopoly
with water, and a low rampart, surrounded by a double wall, with many bastions well provided with cannons. The fortress is almost oval, and measures three English miles in circumference. It is situated directly on the arm of the Kisma, which passes it on its south western side. The country round about this fortress is low and flat, and completely covered by the sea when the flood is high. The eastern and western expanse is unutterably vast, and the ground all round the fortress is covered with mud. One way only, broad and straight, leads to the town, which used to have one of the forts of the fortress just in front, but now the bridge leading to it is demolished, the fort is closed and will be walled up, and at present the fortress has only two approaches, one of them leading to the stream and the other on a slope towards the land.

There are few houses within the fortress and they lie scattered about. All are built of a kind of wood which I did not know before. They are commonly two stories high, and have at the second story a gallery at least on two sides. They seemed to be built in a very cool and convenient fashion though very irregularly. All have been erected by the native Mohammedans, who are here called "Moors." The different stories are seldom higher than $1\frac{1}{2}$; they have flat roofs covered with hollow bricks.

The present head officer, Mr. Ledler, is very energetic; he has made broad level lanes, flanked with trees, some of which are even now already in excellent condition. The Dutch and French used also to have factories here before; the former left this place few years ago, and the French resident was forbidden to show his flag anywhere here in India, as soon as the war broke out, and he has been told to consider himself as prisoner of war, and therefore to keep quiet. Half a German mile from the town towards the North, one finds first some gardens and villas of the English living out here, and further on the big village, where really all the manufacturers live. The factory productions consist of a striped or flowered kind of cotton. The red Indian pocket handkerchiefs are of a pink colour, but are just as durable; and many things not actually manufactured here, are brought hither from distant parts of the country and offered for sale. There is also another kind of cotton material manufactured here, it is dyed pompadour, wears well, and is at this moment a very fashionable dress material at Madras.
Amongst the articles chiefly manufactured in this place is a kind of lacquer work, more common here than anywhere else in India, one sees therefore* cheridans, beds, old chairs, sunshades, the tops of palanquins, painted in this manner, art having the least part in these productions, but the nature and kind of varnish being most important. This varnish is said to be brought hither from Aidrabath and the Sellinique name used here, as well as the one used in Malabar, show that it must have been taken or prepared from a tree, for in both languages it is called Rogganonne, which may be translated into "prepared oil." This oil looks somewhat yellow, but is clearer than linseed-oil, at the same time it is thicker than the latter. It has little smell, neither aromatic nor smoky, its taste is somewhat nauseous and acid, it mixes easily with turpentine, and it forms in this mixture an excellent varnish which can be used even with white colour. It resists the effects of air and water and even the hammer, and the colours covered with this varnish are very durable and never alter with time. The native painters cover the silver in their pictures with it, and so produce the effect of gilding, but in this case the lac is dissolved with it. For ordinary painting they dissolve in it a kind of copal, which is commonly known in India under the name of Damar. All I could learn from the painter who is in the service of the local arsenal was, that it is made from a shrub, growing to half the height of an ordinary man, bearing a kind of long husks, out of the round seed of which this oil is pressed, and furthermore that its name is Stavensettoader or according to the German pronunciation, Agassetti or Agosissetti. According to what he said, these shrubs grow a little below Massulipatam, on the banks of the Kisma stream, however one can give but little credit to what the natives say, therefore I left further investigations to my friend Dr. Campbell.

13-14.—I explored the country in order to get more acquainted with its nature. The flora was extensive because it had rained several times a short while ago. I made a small collection of all the plants I found in bloom, which were more than three hundred, but amongst them were few interesting to me. The calderer plant § which is also called (hiatus in Mss.) formed here the ordinary hedge for the gardens. It is particularly fit for this purpose as it grows to 2 or 3 men's height and very close

* ? Shandrydan. § Probably an Aloe Agave.
together. Its sword shaped leaves, which are provided with sharp thorns at their edges and their back, do not allow anyone to penetrate; but the drawback in these hedges is, that they take up a great amount of room and that their stems and their shoots being partly descending roots, form larger or smaller cavities wherein all bad vermin finds shelter; viz: the Ichneumon * _Canis aurens_, † and very often _Coluber naja_. ‡ They were just in bloom, but there were only male blossoms to be found, whose scent filled the whole air with its sweetness; I have given a description of them repeatedly and omit doing so here again, because Mr. Arch. v. Linne thinks there is a good description of it by Messrs Solander and Banks. The sandy and little overgrown places were almost entirely covered by the _Indigotea gratissima_ which as one walks on fills the air with delicious perfume. I have already described it; it resembles very much the blossom of _Indigofera enneaphylla_, rarely (having) more than two blossoms; its stalks lie also on the ground, but are red and slightly hairy; its leaves are three to five in number, they are mostly oval and unequal in size.

The open field was entirely covered with leaves, resembling those of the lily. Amongst them were some I did not know, but most of them were those of the Indian lily, a new plant, which is difficult to find, because it blooms in April and May without producing any leaves, and only when all has ripened and dried away, do its long narcissus-shaped leaves shoot out. I discovered what it was with certainty by planting the bulb in a garden, where I had the opportunity of watching what I have described the blossoms are not remarkable, this circumstance may be the reason why one has not introduced the plants into gardens. The second kind of the above mentioned leaves was those of _Ornithogalum Zeylonicum_. § It blows at about the same times but has its leaves when blooming. The third kind is a peculiar specimen of Melanthium. I have in my description called it _radicans_, because the tips of the leaves, as soon as they can touch the ground, produce new bulbs; in the Hortus Malabaricus of Rheede is a good drawing of the leaves. He has not had the blossoms drawn because they are but rarely seen. All the bulbs of these plants are called without any distinction Nari Wanjaram

* Mongoose † Jackal ‡ Cobra § Probably a _Chlorophytum_.

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by the natives of Malabar, even the *Pancratium Zeylonicum* and *Mexicanum*, and only in some cases they use Cathe-Wail, Mallee, etc., according to where the flower is found, they call them, wood, field, mountain, etc., Teckchabs, (bulbs being the translation of this word). Their roots have been used intermixed by the French surgeons with Squills, and amongst them *Crinum asiaticum* and the *Amaryllis Zeylonica*. * The French are neither experienced in botany, nor conscientious in their cures, a proof for this being that they call the tendrils of the *Abrus precatorius*, Liquiritia.†

Amongst these lily leaves I found some beautiful specimens of *Ophioglossum vulgar*. In a little pool I saw an *Ardea Gazella*, holding a meal with several ravens. My curiosity made me investigate why these two guests, so very different in nature, should be together here, and I found that in this pool there were many small fish, young frogs still retaining their tails, and millions of shelled monoculi,‡ which were now exposed without water. On my return I saw near a pond some birds picking up worms in the damp grass, and by the chattering noise they easily betrayed themselves to belong to the family of the Gracula rook. Their head, back, wings and tail were black, above their eyes there was a white line, reaching as far as the neck, the breast was quite white, the beak yellow, at the base red, their feet were pale red, and when they flew I saw some white feathers in their wings. The size was that of an ordinary European black-bird, I am in doubt whether they were the *Gracula Sualas*; the short time I spent here did not give me an opportunity to catch one. I saw the *Phoenicopterus*,§ being kept by the Europeans in their gardens for show.

15.—I went across an arm of the stream to a village, which was very prettily situated, and where many big boats and some ships of several hundred tons were being repaired. The boat in which we crossed the river was a palm tree dug out with the root and then made hollow inside; this kind of boats is the only Cottonous (Catamaran?) sort of raftboat used here. The root end of the tree is several times thicker than the other end and is almost quite round by nature, except where the

* Crinum latifolium. ‡ Cypris. † Liquorice. § Flamingo.
numerous thread like roots, which have the thickness of about a little finger, have been cut away, which places are marked by little spots. The other end of the tree is bluntly hewn off, and closed with another kind of wood; on the top it is cut flat on both sides, and a plank as seat for the steersman and those at the oars is nailed upon it. There is an opening scarcely half a foot wide along the whole length of the boat, but the inside is entirely scooped out, and more than twice as wide, specially at the thicker end. They are two fathoms long. They easily upset because they are round. The wood is taken from the black palms.* They are here called Saugeri. All the boats lying here were built out of black palm wood. Those which were built round had some planks from the root and stem of the *Mimosa nilotica*, which grows here very tall and strong. Those however which were blunt at the two ends, had been built entirely from palm wood, most of them being also quite round on the top with a little intersected railing, and all those that wen up the river were built in this way.

I did not find anything particularly interesting in natural history but many pieces of shells which had been thrown up by the sea during the last rainy season, among these were *Tellina, Solines, Ostrea ephippium*, and *Achatina*, and broken pieces of the green *Mytilus* which must have been very big. There was a *Paspalum* growing here in the sandy soil, the stolons were very long, creeping, leafy with a thick, red juicy stalk, the stalk stood straight up and was not surrounded with the flower sheaths of the leaves. The inflorescence was divided into two parts, spreading apart, and each had a short stalk, which was bordered with fine hair; it is very much like the *Paspalum distichum*.

A kind of *Portulaca*, with a creeping, red shiny stalk, and long fleshy leaves with red blossoms,† grew here frequently in the sand, and the *Stipa spinifex* covered the little sandhills here with some Salsolas.

Towards twelve o’clock I returned and had a good boat. The water had risen meanwhile.

16.—I visited the manufactories of the cottons made here, they are not so beautiful as those from Madras, the colours are not as vivid, but there is very little better material manufactured

* No doubt *Borassus flabelliformis*, *L.*
† *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, *L.*