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Tagebuch von Johann Ernst Geister.

Geister, Johann Ernst

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1739.
March 15.

As I wanted a Recreation for my body, having had much business all this while, I resolved to go to Porto novo (which is about 5 leagues from hence) to visit and acquaint myself with the Dutch Gentlemen there. The Dutch having a great Power in East-India, and having been particularly kind to the Protestant Mission, the Protestant Missionaries have always taken care to cultivate a friendship with them. I set out from Cuddalore near three of the Clock in the afternoon and arrived there after seven in the Evening. The Chief M^r. Dornieux and the other Gentlemen received and entertained me very kindly, and I was desired, to christen three children, one of whom was a Grandson of the said M^r. Dornieux.

16. Being resolved not to stay long from home, I set out from Porto novo the next day and arrived at Cuddalore after 10 at night.

With the End of this Month Salomo, who had assisted me hitherto in the Malabar Language insisted very much upon his being dismissed, pretending several Reasons. Though I promised to comply with his desires, he assented himself at last, before I gave my final Resolution, and I found afterwards, that he had committed several irregularities, in borrowing Money and the like, of which he dreaded the Consequences.

30. To my great Joy and Satisfaction M^r. Walther came here from Tranquerbar to stay for some days with me. His design was 1.) to acquaint himself with me 2.) to see, if either in Porto novo or here he could discover something of the ¹⁰⁰⁰ Pagodas which were lost some Months ago not far from hence. As I hitherto by letters and otherwise had done all what I could to find out something of it, I was ready again to do any thing, which could be done that way. The Governour M^r. Hubbard in particular had interposed his authority and done several things to discover the Theft, which however proved ineffectual. Some other Means being proposed upon new suspicions, his worship gave the necessary Orders for a new Examination in this place (because the Man who lost the Money, is an Inhabitant of Fort St. David's) and a handsome Reward was promised to one in this place, who seemed the most likely Man to find the thing out. Yet this last effort had no more effect, than the former. In the Mean time I was very careful to make the best advantage of M^r. Walther's company, who has been long in the Country and is very well skilled in languages and sciences. I profited so much by his conversation, that I found Reason to thank God for his providence in this particular.

April.

With the End of the last month I had an opportunity to be acquainted with an Inhabitant of this place, Pothani by name, who has kept for several years a publick School, but finding himself by his Age unfit for such a laborious work has given it up to one of his Relations. Upon enquiry I found, that he was very well skilled in the Language, and had a little learning according to the Country way, therefore I resolved to take him into my service, to assist me in the language, in which I was likely to advance now faster, because this Man doth not understand any European Language, so that I am obliged to talk nothing but Malabar with him. But this was not the only design, because I thought, that some time or other, if providence should open the way, this Man might be brought over to christianity. Because he being constantly with me, the innate dislike which these people have against the Europeans, will wear out, & I can watch proper opportunities to talk nearer and more confidently to him, when probably he will disclose himself with greater freedom, and give me an opportunity to acquaint him with the excellency and necessity of the christian Religion.

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These Indians are very timorous and reserved, and they must be very well acquainted with a European, before they put so much confidence in him, as to tell him the sentiments of their hearts. Another reason for choosing this man, though a heathen, was this, that amongst his acquaintance he will remove several prejudices, which these people have against the Europeans, taking them to be a sort of vagabonds, irregular unclean and most despicable sort of people; which however they take care enough not to tell a European to his face. Now those inhabitants, whom I should endeavour to bring into my acquaintance, will ask such a man, what my way of living is, and how other circumstances are, whereupon, probably he will tell them, that a great many things are not so as they commonly think, which will make a good impression upon them, remove several obstacles and more them, not to shun my conversation.

The malabar Catechist, Stralapper, who had been hitherto in pay and service, not answering the expectation and his promise, that he would endeavour, to qualify himself for his business, but shewing to the contrary a great incapacity, I had told him some months ago, that I could not promise to keep him any long time more, and that I advised him, to look out for some other business, to gain his livelihood. About this time I told him positively, that after two months time ~~he~~^{he} must expect his dismissal, and that in the mean time he might resolve and enquire for some other convenient business. Several Malabars and Bramines have visited me hitherto, and our discourses were most the same as the above mentioned.

6. Mr. Walther departed from hence in the afternoon.

11. One of the Schoolboys Francisco de Souza, a Roman Catholic, was brought to me again after a long absence. The case was the following. The Popish Priests in this place being afraid of losing some thing, if one way or other the people of their Congregation should communicate with me, they were much discontented to see, that some Popish Parents gave their children to my care, as they knew very well, that they could not hinder it directly and openly, they stayed till the Lent, when their People are obliged to confess and receive the Sacrament. They told the Parents and relations of the boys, what an unpardonable sin this was, for which they should not be admitted to confession, but should be excommunicated, buried in unconsecrated ground etc. and that it was better to drown their children, than to send them to me. It had happened some weeks ago, that this before mentioned boy, being sickly and scabby, had my permission to go and stay with his mother, till he was recovered. He not coming again, I sent to enquire, and an answer was given, that the boy was not well yet, which happened two or three times more. At last they could not help discovering the true reason, desiring me, to dismiss the boy. I answered, that I had ^{not} induced nor forced the boy, to come to me, and I did not intend to force him to any thing, as for religion; but that I would not be forced to dismiss him when he had had his maintenance for several months, and if they would not send him again fairly, I would find means, to have him back again. Upon this they gave a scornfull answer, and I heard, that one of ^{the} Priests had taken public notice of this affair in his church, and threatened the People. As this might have been very prejudicial to my business, I thought proper to acquaint the Governour with it, representing: that the boy with the free consent of his mother had been brought to me; that all the time, he had been with me he might have found every day an opportunity to run away, if he had disliked it; that he had been more than once with his mother, when he was out of order, and always came back freely without being sent for. That the design of this Charity School was not to force any body, to turn Christian or Protestant, if he was not convicted and would accept of it freely; but that in the present

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case I could not help complaining against the Priests, who would cause the Children to be taken away in a forcible manner, though they had cost money for their maintenance.

This worship was very much displeas'd at this great presumption of the Priest, and promis'd me, that the boy should come again, and that he would reprimand the Priest for it. Some days after, the Priest being call'd, thought best, to deny every thing, though at the same time, he complain'd to some Gentlemen in the place, that I us'd violence, against which I answer'd, that I never design'd to force any body in point of Religion, but as I had the favour of living under the protection of an English Government I could not believe, that I did wrong, when I apply'd to the Governour for help against insults of this nature. Though the people saw, that the Governour had taken notice of the affair, yet they us'd delays, till upon a repeated order the boy came back again. An other boy, who, most about the same time was taken away from me, by the same arts, was either brought out of the place or carefully hid, and could not be found. I heard afterwards, that he was here again, but I thought it was better, to let him go, than to have more disputes.

13. After a great many impediments I had at last the joy, to enter into the new built house, and I thank'd God for his providence, which had assist'd and carried me so far, that I could live in a house fit and comodious for my business and for my health and convenience. The whole was not yet done, but the remaining part, was not ~~not~~ very much, and was like to go on the better, when I was present in the house, and had it always under my eyes.

The next following days I took care, as much as the circumstances would permit, to bring every thing in proper order, and to have a publick congregation again, as soon as possible.

22. To day, being Easterday I gave the first publick Sermon again in the Portuguese language, though I had but very few auditors. The day before I sent a messenger about, to give notice of it to all those, who formerly us'd to come now and then. In my Sermon, I first of all, excited those, that were present, to acknowledge Gods favour in having given us after some interruption, a convenient place for a Congregation, and admonish'd them not to neglect this opportunity, intended for the benefit of their souls but to make a right use of it. Then I proceeded to my Text, Declaring them the history of the resurrection of our Saviour. Divine Service is begun with the Litany out of the Portuguese Common prayer book, after this follows the Sermon, and the conclusion is with a prayer. The appointed time is from 8 to 9. in the morning, and the hall of the house is the meeting place. At 10 of the Clock the schoolmaster repeats this Sermon with the Children by way of catechizing.

May.

Though this ~~this~~ is the beginning of the hottest time of the year, yet I find the new house so convenient, that I hardly perceive the heat. This together with the satisfaction of my mind on account of several successes in my business, has contributed so much to my health and vigour, that now in the hot season I can do more, then formerly I could in the cool weather. My main business has been and is yet, to perfect myself ^{in the} country Language, for which I have spared no pains, and (thanks to God)