

sure to the sun favours the laying of the eggs. The *arraus* are found on the beach a great part of the day during the whole month of February. At the beginning of March the straggling troops assemble, and swim towards the small number of islands on which they habitually deposit their eggs. It is probable that the same tortoise returns every year to the same locality. At this period, a few days before they lay their eggs, thousands of these animals may be seen ranged in long files, on the borders of the islands of Cucuruparu, Uruana, and Pararuma, stretching out their necks and holding their heads above water, to see whether they have anything to dread. The Indians, who are anxious that the bands when assembled should not separate, that the tortoises should not disperse, and that the laying of the eggs should be performed tranquilly, place sentinels at certain distances along the shore. The people who pass in boats are told to keep in the middle of the river, and not frighten the tortoises by cries. The laying of the eggs takes place always during the night, and it begins soon after sunset. With its hind feet, which are very long, and furnished with crooked claws, the animal digs a hole of three feet in diameter and two in depth. These tortoises feel so pressing a desire to lay their eggs, that some of them descend into holes that have been dug by others, but which are not yet covered with earth. There they deposit a new layer of eggs on that which has been recently laid. In this tumultuous movement an immense number of eggs are broken. The missionary showed us, by removing the sand in several places, that this loss probably amounts to a fifth of the whole quantity. The yolk of the broken eggs contributes, in drying, to cement the sand; and we found very large concretions of grains of quartz and broken shells. The number of animals working on the beach during the night is so considerable, that day surprises many of them before the laying of their eggs is terminated. They are then urged on by the double necessity of depositing their eggs, and closing the holes they have dug, that they may not be perceived by the jaguars. The tortoises that thus remain too late are insensible to their own danger. They work in the presence of the Indians, who visit the beach