

and sixty-five thousand quintals, must lay thirty-three millions of eggs on the three shores where this harvest is gathered. The results of these calculations are much below the truth. Many tortoises lay only sixty or seventy eggs; and a great number of these animals are devoured by jaguars at the moment they emerge from the water. The Indians bring away a great number of eggs to eat them dried in the sun; and they break a considerable number through carelessness during the gathering. The number of eggs that are hatched before the people can dig them up is so prodigious, that near the encampment of Uruana I saw the whole shore of the Orinoco swarming with little tortoises an inch in diameter, escaping with difficulty from the pursuit of the Indian children. If to these considerations be added, that all the *arraus* do not assemble on the three shores of the encampments; and that there are many which lay their eggs in solitude, and some weeks later,* between the mouth of the Orinoco and the confluence of the Apure; we must admit that the number of turtles which annually deposit their eggs on the banks of the Lower Orinoco, is near a million. This number is very great for so large an animal. In general large animals multiply less considerably than the smaller ones.

The labour of collecting the eggs, and preparing the oil, occupies three weeks. It is at this period only that the missionaries have any communication with the coast and the civilized neighbouring countries. The Franciscan monks who live south of the cataracts, come to the 'harvest of eggs' less to procure oil, than to see, as they say, 'white faces;' and to learn whether the king inhabits the Escorial or San Ildefonso, whether convents are still suppressed in France, and above all, whether the Turks continue to keep quiet. On these subjects, (the only ones interesting

* The *arraus*, which lay their eggs before the beginning of March, (for in the same species the more or less frequent basking in the sun, the food, and the peculiar organization of each individual, occasion differences,) come out of the water with the *terekays*, which lay in January and February. Father Gumilla believes them to be *arraus* that were not able to lay their eggs the preceding year. It is difficult to find the eggs of the *terekays*, because these animals, far from collecting in thousands on the same beach, deposit their eggs as they are scattered about.