

There is something fierce and defiant in the attitude of these Turtles, at the moment they raise themselves to dart at their enemies, or to seize upon their prey. They are as ferocious as the wildest beast of prey; but the slowness of their motions, their inability to repeat immediately the attack, their awkwardness in attempting to recover their balance when they have missed their object, their haggard look, and the hideous appearance of their gaping mouth, constitute at such times a picture as ludicrous as it is fearful and revolting. Their strength is truly wonderful. I have seen a large specimen of *Gypochelys Temminckii* bite off a piece of plank more than an inch thick. They take hold of a stick with such tenacity that they may be carried for a considerable distance suspended to it free above the ground. Their food consists entirely of aquatic animals; fishes and young ducks are their ordinary prey. They lay a considerable number of spherical eggs, from twenty to forty and more, which they deposit not far from the water, in holes which they dig themselves, with their hind legs, upon sloping banks. These eggs are rather small in comparison to the size of the animal, about the size of a small walnut. Their shell is not brittle, nor is it as flexible as that of most of the other Turtles.

## SECTION VII.

### THE FAMILY OF CINOSTERNOIDÆ.

Under the name of *Sternothærina*, Th. Bell has described a group of fresh-water Turtles<sup>1</sup> which embraces three distinct types so widely different, that, in the present state of our knowledge of these animals, they cannot be arranged together upon any consideration. One of these types is the African genus *Sternothærus*, which belongs to the *Pleurodères*,<sup>2</sup> and for which the family name proposed by Bell must be maintained, as a matter of course. The second type is that of the genus *Cistudo*, which truly belongs to the family of *Emydoidæ*, as will be shown in the next section. The third type embraces the genera *Cinosternum*, *Spir.*, and *Staurotypus*, *Wagl.*, which are the leading representatives of the family of *Cinosternoidæ*, as characterized below. In the same year in which Bell characterized the genus *Sternothærus*, J. E. Gray distinguished also a section in the family of *Emydoidæ*, under the name of *Terrapenina*,<sup>3</sup> which corresponds exactly

<sup>1</sup> Zool. Journ., vol. 2, 1825, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> See, above, p. 338, note.

<sup>3</sup> Ann. of Philosophy, 1825, vol. 10, p. 211. The name ought to be written *Terrapenina*.