

Carcass, commissioned for Arctic exploration. "One night, during the midwatch, he stole from the ship with one of his comrades, taking advantage of a rising fog, and set off over the ice in pursuit of a bear. It was not long before they were missed. The fog thickened, and Captain Lutwidge and his officers became exceedingly alarmed for their safety. Between three and four in the morning the weather cleared, and the two adventurers were seen, at a considerable distance from the ship, attacking a huge bear. The signal for them to return was immediately made. Nelson's comrade called upon him to obey it, but in vain; his musket had flashed in the pan; their ammunition was expended; and a

chasm in the ice, which divided him from the bear, probably preserved his life. 'Never mind,' he cried; 'do but let me get a blow at this devil with the butt-end of my musket, and we shall have him.'

Captain Lutwidge, however, seeing his danger, fired a gun, which had the desired effect of frightening the beast; and the lad then returned, somewhat afraid of the consequences of his trespass. The captain reprimanded him sternly for conduct so unworthy of the office which he filled; and desired to know what motive he could have for hunting a bear. 'Sir,' said he, pouting his lip, as he was wont to do when agitated, 'I wished to kill the bear, that I might carry the skin to my father.'



THE TURTLE FISHERY.

N all the turtles the jaws are robust; the beak of the upper jaw is hooked downwards; the edges are sharp, and sometimes saw-like; the lower mandible is received into a groove of the upper; the tongue is very fleshy and moveable in all directions.

It is among the species belonging to the present family that we find the giants of the Chelonian race.

Examples of the leathery turtle have been known to weigh fifteen or sixteen hundred pounds; and other species have been observed weighing eight or nine hundred, with the carapace seven feet in length. In the countries where turtles are common, and attain to very great dimensions, the natives use their carapaces as canoes or boats, for coasting along the shore, as troughs to water cattle, as baths for children, and as roofs for huts. To these circumstances both Pliny and Strabo allude, in their

notice of a nation called "turtle-eaters" (*Chelonophagi*), on the borders of the Red Sea; the custom, therefore, is one of considerable antiquity.

The members of the present family are met with in the warmer latitudes of the ocean, and especially towards the torrid zone. They abound on the shores of many of the West Indian islands, the Antilles, Cuba, Jamaica, Hayti, etc. They are numerous at the Cape Verd and Ascension isles; at the isle of France, the Seychelles islands, and Madagascar; at Vera Cruz in the Gulf of Mexico; at the Sandwich and Galapagos islands, and elsewhere. Stragglers frequently visit the Mediterranean, and occasionally the British shores.

The flesh of some species, but particularly of the green turtle (*Chelonia midas*), is in the greatest request as a luxury for the table, at least in England, and the animal itself is an object of commerce. The arrival of a cargo of "lively turtles" is by no means a thing of trifling importance.

All the turtles afford a considerable quantity of oil, which is employed for various purposes. In some of the West Indian islands it supplies, when fresh, the place of butter, or salad oil, for culinary purposes, and it is also used for burning in lamps.

The eggs of most of the species are excellent, being both nutritive and agreeable to the taste; but the albuminous portion, or "white," as we commonly term it, does not acquire firmness by boiling.

As the flesh of one species, and the shell of another are in such request, the former not only being demanded in England, to add to our luxuries of the table, but also forming a useful and salutary portion of the stores, for the consumption of the crews of vessels engaged in the commerce of the tropical and southern seas, it follows that a regular system of warfare is kept up, at various places, against these tenants of the ocean. Numbers are annually captured, and thousands of eggs collected; and the young when hatched fall a prey, by wholesale, to sea-fowl, and various other birds, and to quadrupeds; nevertheless, the race is not perceptibly thinned.

Turtles have favourite breeding places, to which they regularly return, assembling at the proper season in multitudes, which have often travelled thither from vast distances.

Latreille states, that the troops of tortoises which habitually frequent the Galapagos islands, situated under the line, migrate to the western coast of America, distant about two hundred leagues, in order to deposit their eggs; and that the tortoises which reside near the shores of Africa, resort to the island of Ascension for the same purpose. Each species has its own period in which this important visit is performed; but it is always in the spring, or early part of the summer, and the males follow or accompany the females in their long

voyage. The low sandy shores of small desert isles, or the flat coasts of larger islands, or continents, are their usual haunts; and night is the time in which they begin their operations. The place sought is beyond the mark of the highest tides; and hence these animals have often to drag themselves to considerable distance inland (comparatively speaking), over a long, flat, sandy beach, left dry by the ebbing tide, but to be covered by its return. The following graphic account is from the pen of M. Audubon:—

"On first nearing the shore, and mostly on fine calm moonlight nights, the turtle raises her head above the water, being still distant thirty or forty yards from the beach, looks around her, and attentively examines the objects on shore. Should she observe nothing likely to disturb her intended operations, she emits a loud hissing sound, by which such of her many enemies as are unaccustomed to it are startled, and so are apt to remove to another place, although unseen by her. Should she hear any more noise, or perceive any indications of danger, she instantly sinks, and goes off to a considerable distance; but should everything be quiet, she advances slowly towards the beach, crawls over it, her head raised to the full stretch of her neck, and when she has reached a place fitted to her purpose, she gazes all around in silence. Finding all well, she proceeds to form a hole in the sand, which she effects by removing it from under her body with her hind flappers, scooping it out with so much dexterity, that the sides seldom, if ever, fall in. The sand is raised alternately with each flapper, as with a large ladle, until it has accumulated behind her, when, supporting herself with her head and forepart on the ground, she with a spring from each flapper sends the sand around her, scattering it to the distance of several feet. In this manner the hole is dug to the depth of eighteen inches,

or sometimes more than two feet. This labour I have seen performed in the short period of nine minutes. The eggs are then dropped one by one, and disposed in regular layers, to the number of one hundred and fifty, or sometimes nearly two hundred. The whole time spent in this part of the operation may be about twenty minutes. She now scrapes the loose sand back over the eggs, and so levels and smoothes the surface, that few persons on seeing the spot would imagine that anything had been done to it. This accomplished to her mind, she retreats to the water with all possible despatch, leaving the hatching of the eggs in the sand to the heat of the sun.

When a turtle, or loggerhead, for example, is in the act of dropping her eggs, she will not move, although one should go up to her, or even seat himself on her back; for it seems at this moment she finds it necessary to proceed at all events, and is unable to intermit her labour. The moment it is finished, however, off she starts, nor would it then be possible for one, unless he were as strong as Hercules, to turn her over, and secure her."

It is at this crisis that the turtle-fishery is carried on: the flesh of the females is in the greatest estimation, and at this season it is supposed to be in perfection. At the close of the evening, when a fine moonlight favours the attack, the fishers station themselves along the shore, taking care to conceal themselves, and watch in silence the progress of the turtles as they leave the water, and crawl along the beach. When the favourable moment arrives, the fishers suddenly advance, and despatch the turtles, with clubs, or turn them quickly over on their backs, without giving them time to defend themselves, which they do by throwing with their paddles vast showers of sand in the faces of their assailants. In turning these creatures

over it is often necessary to use levers, several men at the same time combining their strength. When once turned over, the flatness of the back prevents the turtles from rolling round and recovering their position, and the paddles, which they flap with vain efforts, are now useless. If left to themselves, unless, indeed, the tide should reach them, they would perish.

The turtle-fishers from the West Indies and the Bahamas, who catch these animals on the coasts of Cuba and its adjoining islands, particularly the Caïman islands, usually complete their cargoes in six weeks or two months: they then return to their own islands, or sail to different ports with their salted turtle, which is used as food, both by the whites and negroes. This salted turtle is in as great request in the American colonies, as the salted cod of Newfoundland is in many parts of Europe; and the fishing is followed by all these colonists, particularly by the British, in small vessels, on various parts of the coast of Spanish America, and the neighbouring desert islands.

The green turtle is, also, often caught at sea in calm weather, during fine moonlight nights. Two men go together in a boat, which is rowed as silently as possible by one of them, whilst the other is provided with a harpoon, which he holds in readiness to dart at the unsuspecting animal. As soon as they discover a large turtle rising to the surface (the foam it spreads around betraying its presence), they row hastily to the spot, and the harpooner launches his weapon with sufficient force to pierce through the shell into the flesh. To this harpoon is attached a line, which, when the turtle dives, as it does instantly on receiving the wound, is given out, and by its means, when the animal is exhausted with its efforts and the loss of blood, it is hauled into the boat, or drawn ashore.