

tion of forms, not of elements, taking place on every night of Brahma, and a reconstruction of them when he wakes. In the dawn of each secondary creation we find a universal circumfusion of the watery element. Thus in the beginning of things we are told in the Institutes of Menù, that "the first sole Cause, with a thought created the waters, and then moved upon their surface in the form of Brahma the Creator. In like manner Brahma, on awaking from sleep, always finds the world a shapeless ocean, and his first office is to effect the emergence of the land and to form the firmament; after which he vivifies the earth in succession with plants, animals, celestial creatures, and man. At the end of a day of Brahma, which lasts for many thousand ages, he is said to rest, and then all existing forms are destroyed by a general conflagration. The flames are at length quenched, by the fall of incessant rain for a hundred years, and the waters overspreading the earth, fill the middle region and inundate heaven. The world is enveloped in darkness, and the universe is reduced to one vast ocean.* The breath of Vishnu, who is distinguished by the character of the preserver in the Hindoo Trinity, next becomes a strong wind by which the clouds are dispersed, and the Deity then appears in the form of Brahma reposing on his serpent couch upon the deep. As soon as he awakes, the world is renewed to be again destroyed, and again renovated after each Kalpa or day of Brahma's existence, until at last not only do the shapes of things merge into their elements, but the elements themselves are lost in primitive "indiscrete matter."

The repeated destruction and revivification of organic beings, and the doctrine of concomitant revolutions in the material world, which pervade the Eastern cosmogonies, and above all, the belief in reiterated submersions of the land beneath the waters of a universal ocean, are of peculiar interest to the geologist. The dogma last alluded to, clearly constituted one of the most ancient of the Hindoo tenets, and was conspicuous in the legendary poems called the Puranas, especially in the mythological narratives of the Avatars or descents of Vishnu, the preserving power. The object of the three first Avatars, which were composed many centuries after the Vedas, was to recover the earth from the waters. For this purpose the Deity is made successively to assume the forms of a fish, a tortoise, and a boar.

The sacred volume of the Hindoos called the Ordinances of Menù, comprising the Indian system of duties, religious and civil, contains a preliminary chapter "on the Creation," in which the Cosmogony is entirely derived from the writings and traditions of preceding periods and principally from the Vedas. Although it confounds together the doctrines of more than one age and more than one philosophical system, it is full of sublime conceptions of the Deity, expressed with much grandeur of diction. It commences with the following account

* Translation of Vishnù Purana, B. 6. in the first book, ch. ii.—iv., a particular ch. iv. The same work, as I am informed, by Professor Wilson, contains account of primary and secondary creation.