

of the creation of all things. "This universe existed only in the first divine idea yet unexpanded, as if involved in darkness, imperceptible, undefinable, undiscoverable by reason, and undiscovered by revelation, as if it were wholly immersed in sleep. Then the sole self-existing Power, himself undiscerned, but making this world discernible, with five elements, and other principles of nature, appeared with unminished glory, expanding his idea, or dispelling the gloom." He, who exists from eternity, &c. — even He having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, first with a thought created the waters, &c. — The waters are called *nára*, because they are the production of Nara, or the spirit of God; and since they were his first *ayana*, or place of motion, He thence is named *Náráyana*, or "moving on the waters." He is then said "to have framed the heaven above and the earth beneath, placing the subtle ether in the midst, then the eight regions, and the permanent receptacle of waters." He also produced mind and the great principle of the soul, or first expansion of the divine idea, and all vital forms. He created an assemblage of inferior deities, gave being to time and the divisions of time, to the stars also, and to the planets, to rivers, oceans, and mountains, to level plains and uneven valleys, &c.

The numerous destructions and renovations of the world and successive creations, are next alluded to in these words:

"The Being, whose powers are incomprehensible, having created me (*Menù*) and this universe, again became absorbed in the supreme spirit, changing the time of energy for the hour of repose.

"When that Power awakes, then has this world its full expansion; but when he slumbers with a tranquil spirit, then the whole system fades away. . . . For while he reposes, as it were, embodied spirits endowed with principles of action depart from their several acts, and the mind itself becomes inert."

The absorption of all beings into the Supreme essence is then described, and the Divine soul itself is said to slumber, and to remain for a time immersed in "the first idea, or in darkness." After which the text thus proceeds (verse fifty-seven), "Thus that immutable power by waking and reposing alternately, revivifies and destroys, in eternal succession, this whole assemblage of locomotive and immovable creatures."

It is then declared that there has been a long succession of *manwantaras*, or periods, each of the duration of many thousand ages, and—

"There are creations also, and destructions of worlds innumerable: the Being, supremely exalted, performs all this with as much ease as if in sport, again and again, for the sake of conferring happiness." *

The laws or institutes of *Menù* are of uncertain date. Sir William Jones, who translated them from the Sanscrit, fixed the twelfth century before Christ, as the probable epoch of their composition. He supposed them to have assumed their present form (for they are certainly

* Institutes of Hindoo Law, or the Ordinances of *Menù*, from the Sanscrit, translated by Sir William Jones, 1796.