

their kingdoms, and even their schools and colleges. Some of the very old monuments still preserved, show their knowledge and ingenuity. They were not however, wise in all things, for they had no knowledge of the true God, but worshipped the sun and moon, fire and water, earth and air, as their children have done to this day. They worshipped men and animals, and even stocks and stones. As you may suppose, this religion was partly foolish and partly wicked. One of the foolish things in it was that they must not travel out of their native country, or have anything to do, if they could help it, with foreigners. It could not therefore be supposed that they should know much, or indeed anything, of any countries but their own. But, although they knew scarcely anything about geography, they were, and are still, a very proud and conceited people. They fancy that they are very clever and learned, and they boast a great deal of their knowledge. Now, boastful people are almost sure to be ignorant. If you hear a person talk much of what he knows, you may expect to find him very silly. And we shall see this if we consider what notions of geography the Hindoos have, and then I think that even the youngest of our readers will confess that, with all their boasting, their ideas are most foolish and absurd.

Most of them suppose that the Earth is a great plain, and that in the centre of this plain there stands a most wonderful mountain called Meru. This mountain is said to be made up of gold and jewels, and to be the place where the gods dwell. And its size and shape are quite as wonderful as its riches, for it rises straight up, like a chimney of a glass manufactory turned upside down, for the smaller part is below, and the larger above. But there is something about this mountain still more marvellous; for it is said to be 840,000 miles high, 160,000 miles wide at the top, and 80,000 at the bottom. They believe also that this mountain causes day and night all over the world, in this way—the sun moves round the mountain, and when he shines upon one side of it, that side, with the countries between it and the sun, have day. But, on the opposite side, the shadow of the mountain falls upon the countries below, and covers them with darkness.

So much for Mount Meru; but this is only the 'centre of the earth, which is formed of a number of large rings or belts around it. First, there is a great plain sweeping all round the base of Meru. This is the part of the world where man