

ing mind. It may be that a mechanical and mindless series of changes can produce numbers without end, or forms of countless variety: but this process would deserve the name of history only if either the transition from unity to multiplicity, or the production of formal variety, were capable of being understood by a thinking mind,—if the result of the process were a matter of some concern, if an interest were attached to it, if a gain or loss could be recorded. The pendulum which swings backwards and forwards in endless monotony, the planet which moves round the sun in unceasing repetition, the atom of matter which vibrates in the same path, have for us no interest beyond the mathematical formulæ which govern their motions, and which permit us mentally to reproduce, *i.e.*, to think them. A combination of an infinite number of these elementary movements would have as little interest, were it not that out of such a combination there resulted something novel and unforeseen: something that was beautiful to behold or useful to possess, something that was valuable to a thinking mind in a higher or lower meaning of the word.

But if, even in inanimate nature, the processes of change acquire an interest, possess a history, only if referred to a thinking mind which can record, understand, and appreciate them, how much more is this the case when we deal with human affairs, where man is not only the thinking beholder but the principal agent? Here the historic interest would cease, were the succeeding years and ages to produce no valuable change, were the rule of existence and the order of life to repeat themselves in unceasing monotony. The savage tribes of Africa have a history: but

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History of
savage
tribes, what
is it?