

elaborate aims in their analysis. At a *post mortem*, minutiae are well tested. Also in criticism opinions and parallel passages should be as nicely weighed as diamond dust. As it was vile to take the one ewe lamb from the man in the parable, so it is wrong to appropriate the property of a poor author and give it to one exceedingly wealthy. It is in this point that the power of an acute critic comes into play. The wisdom needed for determination is like Solomon's. The progeny must be trusted to the legitimate parent, and not slain in the judgment. The task of criticism, then, is one where absolute discrimination is a necessary element. When the existing fact of canons, not precise enough to rule out probability of hasty condemnation on circumstantial evidence, is taken into account, one perceives why a Reviewer, of all others, should be cautious. While the stigma of plagiarist is made on palpable thieves, the error of wrongly arraigning ought to be guarded against. The constables of letters, riding through the list of letters, with close scrutiny and deliberate inspection, ridding the tournament of false visors and sham shields, are looked to for impartial execution of chivalrous laws. They should be apt but not hasty, free from personal rancour and unmanly sentiment; being like Bayard, the brave, *sans peur et sans reproche*. They are required to detect the base borrowers of others' words. For there is nothing so detestable in literature as affecting what does not really belong naturally to one, or buying fame with pilfered coin. One safe rule, in pronouncing upon plagiarism, is to hold that a noble nature cannot stoop to conquer. It is not genius that condescends to the meanness of taking what is not its own. A gentleman, whose rental-roll gives him an abundant treasure, will rarely, if ever, (unless insane), be found at the bar of justice, convicted of knocking down his poor neighbour and robbing him. This is the presumptive truth claimed for well-proved, rich thinkers. Poor Poe, a monomaniac and yet a brilliant mind—these being compatible—charged Longfellow with preying upon his poems. But the irritable author of the "Raven," (one of the most melodious ballads extant), was utterly wrong. Longfellow has enough of his own to obtain for him a perpetual renown in every house-hold. Here are a few specimens, out of many, containing like thoughts. I do not think these *coincidences* (for I have full faith in the author's originality) have ever been placed parallel in print. That they are positive plagiarisms, would be a rash opinion. Working with the same matter, poets might produce like features; and the paucity of instances inclines one to think these are seeming reproductions of former ideas; that genuine souls, mining for gold, happened on the same *lead*.

## I.

Who, bewailing Hero's fate in "Much ado about nothing," has not dwelt upon this fine line?

"Done to death by slanderous tongues."

ACT V., SCENE III.

Turn up Poe's poems and you shall be reminded of a familiar friend, by this verse.

"By you, by yours, the slanderous tongues,  
That did to death the innocent."