whether the word is singular or plural. We will distinguish crochet with *et*, crocheted with *ete*, pique (the cloth) with *ue*, croquet with *uet*, and roqueted with *uete*. We must not forget that Duchesne requires *es-e*, Duquesne *ues-e*, Niquée *uee*, Torquay *uay*, and Queyrac *uey*. Chassez ("sashay") completes our French list with *ez*.

We spell seine with *ei-e*, eigne with *eig-e*, and eyot (ait) with *eyo*. We must remember rhaphe with *ha*, Thame in England with *ha-e*, heir with *hei*, and renaigue with *ai-ue*. As an oddity we find quegh, which ought to be obsolete, troubled with *egh* or *aich* (quaich), quoits ("quaits" in the country) has *oi*. Theys (tay) goes with *heys*, and old Mr. Trew (Tray) is ever faithful to *ew* in his name.

But why prolong this exhibit? The reader is already exhausted, and the chapter is not yet complete. Suffice it to say there are nearly one hundred different ways of representing the long sound of *a*, many of them in patronymics and names of places that need to be pronounced by English-speaking people. For other vowel sounds there is an equally extensive variety of representatives.

All this would, perforce, show the necessity of a reform in spelling—phonetic reform, if need be; but, on the other hand, the letters of a word are the earmarks, if you please, that indicate ownership—that show the philologic derivation and history of a word. Phonetic reform could never touch the majority of irregularities in spelling and retain any intelligence in the word. Therefore, with all its faults, our heterographic orthography is preferable to any homographic orthography that can be devised with our present alphabet.

What we can do is this: Drop some of our redundant letters as *me* from programme, *ue* from catalogue, etc.; final *e* from strychnine, etc., when the preceding vowel is short; *a* from plead (pled), past tense and pp., and similar words; change *ph* to *f*, as in sulfur. There is plenty of scope for good work in this direction, and such work will finally become permanent. We would become accustomed to these words, as to dock-tailed sheep, and prefer them.

B. B. Smyth.

Topeka, Kansas.

Feigned Death in Snakes.

For a long time I have desired information from others about a common trick of the ordinary "blowing viper," or "spreadhead snake" (*Heterodon*, in several species). I have observed that such animals when much worried, or slightly hurt, will frequently feign death. This habit has doubtless been often reported before, but I do not recall having seen definite mention of it in print but once. Several months ago, some one writing about snakes in a daily newspaper, alluded to this matter, and gave, as an explanation, the off-hand statement that the snake became frightened and "fainted from fear." That this is not the explanation will, I think, appear from what I have noted about several cases that came under my own observation.

The first time I ever noticed this behavior on the part of a snake was when I was a child. At that time I was one day crossing a field accompanied by an old negro man and a small dog. The dog found a common black "spread-head," and, without actually taking hold of it, began to worry it by running around it, snapping at it and barking. Anxious to save my friend, the dog, from what I supposed was deadly peril, I struck the snake with the only weapon quickly available, a small whip I carried in my hand. The snake immediately ejected a toad it had recently swallowed, then appeared to bite itself in the side, and promptly turned on its back and stiffened (but did not become stretched straight out) and lay perfectly still. There was not even a wiggle in its tail when pinched. Believing, as I then did, that all snakes were venomous, I supposed this one had killed himself; and remarking that he "seemed dead enough," I was on the point of leaving him. But the old negro said, "Oh no! If you leave them when they bite themselves, then their mates come along and lick the bite, and they come to." So I mashed the snake's head in a way that no amount of licking would ever heal. The old man evidently knew, by some means, that snakes which appeared thus to commit suicide would recover, and knowing no real explanation of why they should he invented one. Therein he followed the example of more eminent men than himself.

Before I again noticed such action by a snake I had