

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

LEO'S DEATH PREDICTED.

A story has been circulating recently in the press, which, whether true or not, hardly is calculated to add years to the life of the present head of the Roman Catholic church. It is said that in 1878, when Leo XIII ascended the papal throne, a certain monk prophesied that he was to reign twenty years. The pope's health at that time was considered delicate, and it was not generally expected that he would reach the age assigned to him by the monk. Years have passed by, however, and there are now only some months left of the twenty years, and the prediction is again being remembered. It is said that ten years ago a test was made to find out whether the monk believed in his own words. A telegram was sent to the monastery stating that Pope Leo was dead. It caused great alarm among the worthy fathers, but the monk calmly declared the message a fraud, because the pope had ten years more to live.

It cannot be very pleasant to his holiness to hear such stories relating to his allotted term of life. Unless he is exceptionally well fortified against the influences of suggestions, it is quite possible that the mere repetition of the alleged prediction can undermine his health to such a degree as to make the twentieth year of his reign the last of his life.

AN ANCIENT IRRIGATION CANAL.

In this age when irrigation is the great question, at least so far as arid regions are concerned, it may be interesting to know that, according to tradition, one of the canals planned and built by Joseph, the son of Jacob, in Egypt, still is extant, and after four thousand years still serves the purpose for which it was designed. This canal is known as Bahr Jomei and brings the water of the Nile to the province of Fayoum, making it possible for a large population to find a living there. The canal took its rise from a point near Aslut, and ran almost parallel with it for nearly two hundred and fifty miles, creeping along under the western cliffs of the Nile valley, with many a bend and winding, until at length it gained an eminence, as compared with the river bed, which enabled it to turn westward through a narrow pass and enter a district which was otherwise shut off from the fertilizing floods on which all vegetation in Egypt depends. The northern end stood seventeen feet above low Nile, while at the southern end it was at an equal elevation with the river. Through this cut ran a perennial stream, which watered the province, endowing it with fertility. In the time of the annual flood a great part of the canal was under water, and then the river's current would rush in a more direct course into the pass, carrying with it the rich silt which takes the place of manure and keeps the soil in a constant state of productiveness.

Some travelers see in this waterway

only a natural arm of the Nile modified and controlled by engineering skill, but there is some probability that the tradition which traces it to the wisdom of the Egyptian premier of Biblical fame is reliable. It is supported by accounts written by Greek and Roman historians, such as Herodotus, Strabo, Mutianus and Pliny. These explained that the canal dug by the ancient Israelites served to carry the surplus waters of the Nile into an extensive lake lying south of the Fayoum, and so large that it not only modified the climate, tempering the arid winds of the desert and converting them into the balmy airs which nourished the vines and the olives into a sweetness and fragrance unknown in any part of the country, but also added to the food supply of the land such immense quantities of fish that the royal prerogative of the right of piscary at the great weir was valued at \$250,000 annually.

Of the stupendous undertaking and the vast resources available at that remote antiquity—supposing the tradition to be genuine—some idea may be formed from what is known of more recent undertakings of a similar kind. The Mahmudije canal built in 1819 by Mohammed Ali connects the Nile at Rosetta with Alexandria, and irrigates the land in this region. It was completed in one year, but it required the combined strength of 250,000 laborers and cost 7,500,000 francs.

METHODS IN SCHOOLS.

In the East the matter of district school methods in Sunday schools is receiving considerable attention from those in the last named organizations. The question came up through the action of college professors and others engaged as instructors in secular schools introducing and advocating the methods used therein as suitable to Sunday school work. The innovation was allowed in many places and even encouraged for a time, with the idea that improvement would result.

Now, however, the leading religious workers in the schools declare that the secular school methods are not only inferior to the old plan that was followed but are an actual injury to the children who attend Sunday schools. The objection to them is the same that was successfully maintained in discussing the matter in Utah a couple of years ago. The district school methods are all right for the purpose of such schools, where there is more or less of a cramming of theoretical knowledge, to be applied in practice in later life; but with the Sunday school instruction there is the vital difference of a needed immediate application in practical moral training. The trouble with secular school methods in Sunday schools is that the former lack the spiritual force necessary to the class of instruction given in the latter, and hence have proved a failure. This is the conclusion arrived at unanimously by the leading workers in the Sunday school cause in the East.

The conclusion named is about right. A spiritual force is necessary in moral and religious training that can be dispensed with to a degree in some other places without a sense of great loss. But to be effective all religious or moral training must possess the spiritual element. Religious training and theological learning may be very different things at times. The chief field of the Sunday school is to train in practical religion, rather than mere theoretical theology; it is for complete theological instruction, which means practical application of the theory taught, that the pupils may be interested in being that which they learn they should be in righteousness.

THE CATTLE AND SHEEP LICENSE DISPUTE.

There is a reasonable certainty of a big legal contest, and a prospect of much ill feeling being engendered soon among those engaged in certain classes of business in this State. What makes it more unfortunate is that some county officials in different parts of the State have lent themselves, unwittingly or otherwise, to aggravating a situation where the irritation might have been reduced by wise and conservative action, instead of being increased as it now is. For some days past deputations from different counties have been in the city consulting with leading lawyers, and today the executive committee of a State association is discussing the method to be followed in an endeavor to prohibit several counties taking action in the way their commissioners have decided.

The trouble brought to the fore is the old irritation between the sheep men and cattle men, in which it now looks as though the public is to be made a cat's paw for one or the other side. Several boards of county commissioners have decided to levy a per capita tax upon certain animals, as a license with which to raise revenue. In some counties this tax has been fixed at two cents per head for sheep, in others five cents, and still others ten cents. Then some counties have put a tax of fifty cents per head upon range horses and cattle. The disparity in the rules adopted leaves room for but one conclusion, viz: That in counties where the sheep men have a predominating influence the cattle industry is to be knifed, and in those where the cattle men hold the political strings the sheep industry is to have the life cut out of it; and that the government weapon of taxation is to be made the means of throat slitting. If the only question were a straight one for regulating by license either one or the other class of business there would not be such absence of uniformity, neither would there be any excessive levy.

As to the matter of power of counties require a license, there is some dispute on that; though the general conclusion is that a license may be required to the extent necessary for a proper regulation of the business concerned. This is the effect of official legal opinion here, and of recent decisions quoted from California and elsewhere. But where the so-