

its results, and may at the same time be interesting studies in themselves.

We saw in a previous paper that one of the characteristic features of Christ's ethical teaching was the supremacy of love. This was so frequently impressed upon the disciples and so splendidly exemplified by His own life that they could not mistake its importance. It constantly appears in their teaching as well. It was inevitable that it should express itself in some novel experimental forms in the early history of the church. One of the best known of these was the establishment of at least a partial community of goods among the members of the Church at Jerusalem. There can be no doubt as to the spirit which originated this system, and if that spirit could have been continued free from all intermixture of human weakness and selfishness it would seem as if it ought to have been successful. The ideal is one at any rate which has never ceased to captivate the imagination of enthusiasts. If it had never been tried we should doubtless have not a few in the church to-day bewailing the want of faith and the want of love which hinder this perfection of Christian brotherhood. But the experiment there was soon discontinued and was not attempted at all elsewhere. It so speedily proved disastrous that they had to study the application of their great principle afresh, and they learned that there was no such short cut to its perfect realization in actual life. They found they had to study human nature and the conditions of human existence as well, and to fit in their doctrine so that it would harmonize all these if it was not to do even more harm than good. That the problem of wisely providing for the wants of the poor is no easy one is abundantly evidenced by the fact that it is still largely unsolved. But when there comes such a revival of spiritual life that the church will honestly take up the task of solving it there are some experiments which it will not now need to repeat, and there are some lessons which it can hardly fail to learn from the past. The centuries now gone have not been altogether devoid of practical teaching.