teacher. *There were many;* disciples, or publicans and sinners.

V. 16. *The scribes.* Their function was to interpret and develop the law, to teach it to their pupils, and to act as judges in the Jewish courts. *Pharisees.* The word means "separatists." As a class they date from the second century B. C. They stood for complete separation from everything non-Jewish. To secure this the law must be scrupulously kept. They had an association of about 6,000 members. Most of the scribes were of this party. *Eating with the sinners* (Rev. Ver.). This complaint was frequently made against Jesus' geniality in social matters, Matt. 11 : 19 ; Luke 15 : 2 ; 19 : 7.

V. 17. *The righteous;* those who follow the way of righteousness (legal), as the scribes do, and so are reckoned as righteous. Jesus felt that He could not do these much good. *Sinners;* those who had abandoned the effort, or had never tried, to keep the letter of the law. Jesus had a special message for them, and some hope of doing them good. His message was the prophetic one of Mic. 6 : 8.
III. The Question of Fasting, 18-22.

V. 18. *Used to fast;* Rev. Ver., "were fasting", observing some customary fast. The stricter Jews fasted on the second and the fifth day of each week (see Luke 18 : 12). *They come.* Who ? Here apparently the scribes ; in Matthew the disciples of John.

V. 19. *Children of the bridechamber;* the male friends of the bridegroom, whose duty it was to keep up the merriment at the marriage festivities. The merry-making lasted several days after the wedding (see Judg. 14 : 17). *They cannot fast;* a physical and moral impossibility. So the early ministry of Jesus was a time of joy and cheer. Fasting was out of the question.

V. 20. *Taken away;* a prophecy of His violent death. *Then shall they fast;* a natural fast born of sorrow. Fasting was a recognized institution of the early church, Acts 10 : 30 ; 13 : 3 ; 14 : 23 ; 1 Cor. 7 : 5.

V. 21. Here follow two homely little sketches to illustrate v. 19, that the disciples should not fast when they are not mourning. *New cloth;* literally, "undressed" or "unfulled". *Old garment;* outworn and threadbare.

Rent is made worse. The old cloak may need mending, but ordinary prudence suggests that it should not be mended with cloth that will shrink. Our Lord is referring to the demands of the Pharisees and the disciples of John that He should command His disciples to obey the precepts of Judaism, and so to make the gospel a mere addition to the Mosaic system, on a level with the teaching of the Pharisees.

V. 22. *Putteth;* to ferment and keep. *New wine;* wine recently made. *Bottles;* literally, "skins", used as bottles. *Wine.. spilled..bottles..marred;* Rev. Ver., "the wine perisheth, and the skins", the ill-assorted union bad on both sides. The old forms of religious life are inadequate to the new principle which Jesus brought. *New wine..into new bottles;* a new set of religious forms for the new religious principles.

Light from the East

BOTTLES—Of earthenware, were common among the Hebrews, and glass ones were not unknown. The Egyptians manufactured glass from an early period and glass bottles were one of the exports of Phenicia, but must always have remained a luxury of the rich (Job 28 : 17). The Hebrews in their nomadic state found the skins of kids, goats, sheep and cows the readiest and best means for carrying liquids, and the custom continued long after their settlement. The head and the lower part of the legs were cut off, and the animal was skinned from the neck downwards, just as we draw off a tight glove, so that the skin retained the shape of the animal. The neck was fitted with a thong which opened and closed the skin, and the other openings were firmly tied with thongs. The skins intended for oil and wine were tanned with oak bark and seasoned by being hung in the smoke. Wine was generally placed in new skins before the fermentation was ended, and they stretched a little to admit of the necessary expansion, but when they had done this once, they hardened in that shape, and would not stretch any more, but would burst if subjected to the process again.