

Numerous are the hobbies of mankind ! Useful are they ! As Oliver Wendell Holmes puts it, "They are the second lines of rails to save the soul's wear and tear." Carpentering, carving, modelling, botanizing, geologizing, making collections of all kinds of curios, paintings, engravings, china, even of the commonest objects in nature or art, from the collection of ponderous armour to the light postage stamp, all prove interesting, and because interesting they recreate ; that is their mission and use in the economy of human life.

But what, in the next place, comes directly under the head of amusements and recreations in which the Christian may lawfully indulge without doing violence to principle ?—and what, further, is the exact place such should hold in the Christian life ?

It is not very easy to answer the first question, because it would involve a catalogue of all the innocent pastimes man is familiar with, whether prince or peasant, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. We are dealing rather with principles than details, and may say, under this head are comprised those forms of amusement and recreation of which the properly informed Christian conscience approves, and which being indulged in by us constitute no stumbling-block in the Christian path of another. Is not this the meaning of St. Paul's teaching when he says : "Judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling" (Rom. xiv. 13) ; and again—v. 21—"It is good not to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth." (Revised Version.) Yes, consideration for a weak brother must be a large element in the question both of the quality and quantity of our amusements and recreation. How may our action affect him ?

Still, we may outline two or three groups, suggest-