

The quick feeling of life, the exuberance of animal spirits which break out in the traveller, the sportsman, the poet, the painter, should be more generally diffused. We should be all the better and all the happier for it. Life ought to be freer, heartier, more enjoyable than it is at present. If the professional fetter must be worn, let it be worn as lightly as possible. It should never be permitted to canker the limbs. We are a free people—we have an unshackled Press—we have an open platform, and can say our say upon it, no King or despot making us afraid.... But, although we enjoy greater political freedom than any other people, we are the victims of a petty social tyranny. We are our own despots—we tremble at a neighbour's whisper. A man may say what he likes on a public platform—he may publish whatever opinion he chooses—but he dare not wear a peculiar fashion of hat on the street. Eccentricity is an outlaw. Public opinion blows like the east wind, blighting bud and blossom on the human bough. A consequence of all this, society is losing picturesqueness and variety — we are all growing up after one pattern.

Alexander Smith