

Merrie England

Martin Robertson

Don't smile in the street
or someone you meet
of the opposite sex
(or even the same)
may think you mean them.
England Suspects.

If seized with a laugh
conceal it in cough.
Of course we have humour,
but laughing aloud
is odd in a crowd
and gives rise to rumour.

Don't talk in a train
unless to complain.
Veil up your soul:
don't weep at the play
or someone may say
"He's no self-control."

This respectable curse
is laid on us: worse
than women or drink
is laughter, is sobbing.
Who killed Cock Robin?
Cromwell, I think.

Victoria busily
stamped the grave Wesley
and others had filled;
but Cromwell (and Charles
the foolish and false)
they it was killed.