January, 1795

By Mary Robinson

Pavement slipp'ry, people sneezing,
    Lords in ermine, beggars freezing;
Titled gluttons dainties carving,
    Genius in a garret starving.

Lofty mansions, warm and spacious;
    Courtiers cringing and voracious;
Misers scarce the wretched heeding;
    Gallant soldiers fighting, bleeding.

Wives who laugh at passive spouses;
    Theatres, and meeting-houses;
Balls, where simp'ring misses languish;
    Hospitals, and groans of anguish.

Arts and sciences bewailing;
    Commerce drooping, credit failing;
Placemen mocking subjects loyal;
    Separations, weddings royal.

Authors who can't earn a dinner;
    Many a subtle rogue a winner;
Fugitives for shelter seeking;
    Miser hoarding, tradesmen breaking.

Taste and talents quite deserted;
    All the laws of truth perverted;
Arrogance o'er merit soaring;
    Merit silently deploring.

Ladies gambling night and morning;
    Fools the works of genius scorning;
Ancient dames for girls mistaken,
    Youthful damsels quite forsaken.

Some in luxury delighting;
    More in talking than in fighting;
Lovers old, and beaux decrepid;
    Lordlings empty and insipid.

Poets, painters, and musicians;
    Lawyers, doctors, politicians:
Pamphlets, newspapers, and odes,
    Seeking fame by diff'rent roads.

Gallant souls with empty purses;
    Gen'rls only fit for nurses;
School-boys, smit with martial spirit,
    Taking place of vet'ran merit.
Honest men who can’t get places,
    Knaves who shew unblushing faces;
Ruin hasten’d, peace retarded;
    Candor spurn’d, and art rewarded.