“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms;
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin’d,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well sav’d, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

Jaques, As You Like It, Act II, Scene VI
NOTES

merely = just, only

time = here, a life or lifetime

part = here, a character in a play or drama

ages = here, periods of time

infant = a young child

mewling = a small weak noise that a cat makes (in modern English, 'to mew')
puking = being sick, vomiting

satchel = a shoulder bag that children sometimes use to carry books to school

sighing = here, sighing with sexual pleasure

furnace = an object which contains a fire, used for heating

woeful = unhappy (old-fashioned English)

ballad = a slow love song

mistress = 'mistress' means female lover but it can also mean a woman in charge

eyebrow = the row of small hairs above someone's eye

oaths = promises

pard = a large cat, such as a leopard (old-fashioned English)

jealous in honour = here, jealous means that someone takes care of something very carefully - so the young man takes great care of his honour, his reputation as a good man

sudden and quick in quarrel = 'quarrel' is a slightly old-fashioned word for an argument; 'sudden' here means unpredictable - so in an argument this young man might suddenly and become violent

Seeking the bubble reputation = a bubble is empty, so by 'seeking the bubble reputation', Shakespeare means that the man does things that make him look good even if they are pointless

Even in the cannon's mouth = a 'cannon' was a large gun, and it's 'mouth' was at the front - so the man seeks his reputation even if it means standing in front of guns, i.e. going to war or getting in fights

justice = here, a judge or magistrate - so someone very respected
round belly = belly means 'stomach' - so a 'round belly' is a large or fat man's stomach!

good capon lin'd = 'to line' means to fill something at the edges (e.g. 'line a tin for baking a cake') and 'capon' was chicken to eat - so the man was fat from eating good chicken

wise saws = wise sayings or phrases (old-fashioned English)

instances = examples (as in 'for instance')

lean and slipper'd pantaloon = 'lean' meant 'thin'; a slipper is what people wear indoors; a 'pantaloon' meant an old man - so this describes a thin old man who stays inside

pouch = a small bag for carrying money

hose = tights, thin trousers that men wore in Shakespeare's time

well sav'd = kept carefully

a world too wide = much too big

shrunk shank = 'to shrink' means to grow smaller, and a 'shank' is a piece of meat cut from a leg of an animal - so the man's legs have grown narrower with age

manly = if someone is 'manly' they have characteristics people traditionally admire in men, e.g. being strong and brave

Turning again toward = becoming again

treble = a treble is the higher part of a piece of music - so Shakespeare is referring to a boy's high voice

pipes = a musical instrument that makes a high sound

eventful = full of activity, containing lots of events

history = here, a kind of play that talks about events in the past

second childishness = being like a child again (in modern English, we sometimes talk about a 'second childhood')

mere = here, absolute or complete (old-fashioned use)

oblivion = if someone is 'oblivious' they don't know what is happening around them, and if they live in 'oblivion' they are completely forgotten by other people

Sans = without (this is French for 'without')