

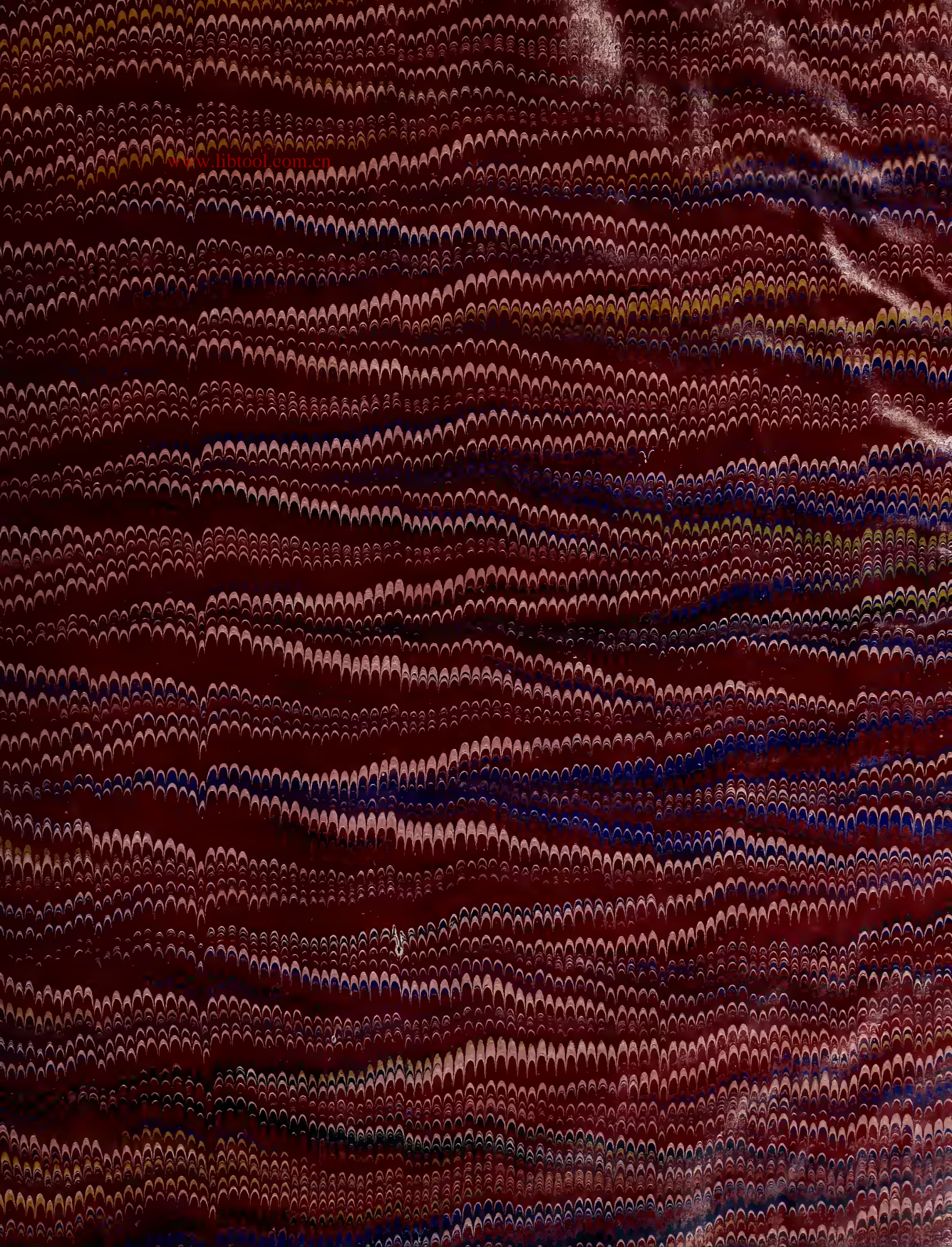
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THE SEVEN AGES

OF

SHAKSPEARE.

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"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..."

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# THE SEVEN AGES

OF

# SHAKESPEARE.

*Text by  
John Martin*



*With an engraving by  
John Martin  
from the original  
manuscript*



LONDON:  
JOHN VAN VOORST, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCXL.  
1840

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THE favour with which the attempt to illustrate the Elegy of Gray was received led to the following series of illustrations.

The notes in explanation of this celebrated passage in the works of Shakspeare are so copious that the editor would have been contented with reference to them, hopeless of being able to add anything to what is there collected; but the kindness of Lady Callcott has furnished him with the following interesting illustration of the subject, which cannot fail to be perused with the pleasure and satisfaction always derived from whatever proceeds from her pen:—

SIR,

ON reading over the names of the commentators on Shakspeare, particularly of those who have turned their attention to the often-quoted passage in “As You Like it,” comparing the world with a stage, and the Seven Ages of Man to “its exits and its entrances,” it would be natural to conclude that all that learning and sagacity could do to illustrate the passage had been already accomplished.

It appears, however, that there are still some passages, even among the classical writers, which those commentators have not pointed out, bearing closely on the subject. To go no further than Horace’s Art of Poetry, can anything be

more apt than the poet's advice\* to the writer of plays, where human life is at once placed upon the stage, and a fitness of dramatic delineation for each period is truly and delicately traced? We might even turn to the Greek philosophers and moral poets for similar illustrations. Probably, however, the earliest writer who has spoken of the "Seven Ages" in so distinct and definite a manner as to be compared with Shakspeare, is quoted by Hurwitz in his Hebrew Tales: thus —

“ THE SEVEN AGES.

“ The first commences in the first year of human existence, when the infant lies like a king on a soft couch, with numerous attendants about him, all ready to serve him, and

\* “ *Ætatis ejusque notandi sunt tibi mores,  
Mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis.  
Reddere qui voces jam scit puer et pede certo  
Signat humum, gestit paribus colludere, et iram  
Colligit ac ponit temere, et mutatur in horas.  
Imberbis juvenis, tandem custode remoto,  
Gaudet equis canibusque et aprici gramine campi ;  
Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,  
Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus æris,  
Sublimis, cupidusque, et amata relinquere pernix.  
Conversis studiis ætas animusque virilis  
Quærit opes et amicitias, inservit honori,  
Commisisse cavet quod mox mutare laboret.  
Multa senem circumveniunt incommoda ; vel quod  
Quærit, et inventis miser abstinet, ac timet uti ;  
Vel quod res omnes timide gelideque ministrat ;  
Dilator, spe longus, iners avidusque futuri,  
Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti  
Se puero, censor castigatorque minorum.”*

eager to testify their love and attachment by kisses and embraces.

“ The second commences about the age of two or three years, when the darling child is permitted to crawl on the ground, and, like an unclean animal, delights in dirt and filth.

“ Then, at the age of ten, the thoughtless boy, without reflecting on the past or caring for the future, jumps and skips about, like a young kid on the enamelled green, contented to enjoy the present moment.

“ The fourth stage begins about the age of twenty, when the young man, full of vanity and pride, begins to set off his person by dress, and, like a young unbroken horse, prances and gallops about in search of a wife.

“ Then comes the matrimonial state, when the poor man, like the patient ass, is obliged, however reluctantly, to toil and labour for a living.

“ Behold him now in the parental state, when surrounded by helpless children craving his support, and looking to him for bread, he is as bold, as vigilant, and as fawning too, as the faithful dog; guarding his little flock, and snatching at everything that comes in his way in order to provide for his offspring.

“ At last comes the final stage, when the decrepid old man, like the unwieldy though sagacious elephant, becomes grave, sedate, and distrustful. He then also begins to hang down his head towards the ground, as if surveying the place where all his vast schemes must terminate, and where ambition and vanity are finally humbled to the dust.”\*

When travelling through Italy, a few years ago, we found in the cathedral of Sienna a curious proof that the division of human life into seven periods, from infancy to extreme

\* Medrash Koheloth.

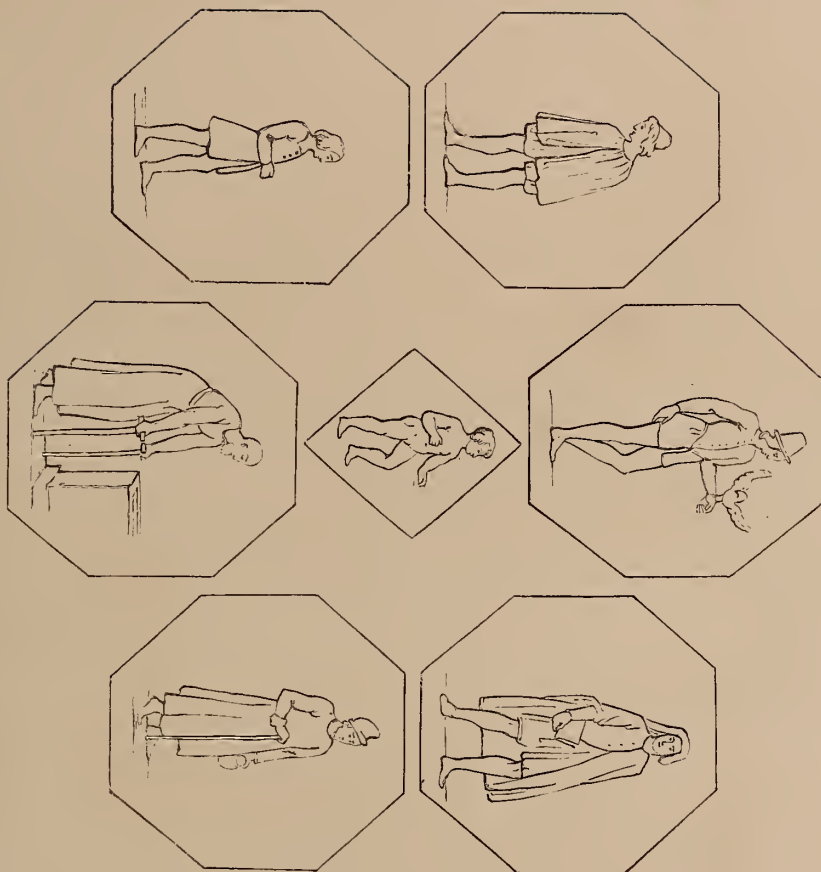
old age, with a view to draw a moral inference, was common before Shakspeare's time.

The person who was showing us that fine church, directed our attention to the large and bold designs of Beccafumi, which are inlaid in black and white on the pavement, entirely neglecting some works of a much older date, which appeared to us to be still more interesting on account of the simplicity and elegance with which they are designed.\* Several of these represented Sibyls and other figures of a mixed moral and religious character; but in one of the side chapels we were both surprised and pleased to find seven figures, each in a separate compartment, inlaid on the pavement, representing the Seven Ages of Man. Our time was so very short, that it was only possible to make a slight sketch by way of memorandum of the subjects; that sketch accompanies this letter, in order that you may compare it with Shakspeare's poetry, and the Hebrew parable.

The division of human life into seven periods, appears to have been a common theme among the elder moralists; it may possibly have arisen from considering threescore and ten years as the term of our natural life, and portioning it out into seven tens accordingly.

The Sienna floor gives countenance to this idea; the youngest figure is almost infantile, but yet too old both for the "mewling infant" of Shakspeare, and the soft nursling of the Medrash. The boy just turned of ten years old is evidently designed in the next figure, and the cloaked youth of twenty approaches to a manly appearance. At thirty, with his hawk upon his fist, he goes on to middle age in perfect vigour; till at forty he attends to business, and with book in hand, may be supposed to have entered

\* Lanzi says they are by Federigi of Sienna, who flourished in 1482.



into the mercantile or senatorial dignity. He is now of greater bulk, and more self-important. From fifty to sixty, he declines; he has a staff, but he has also a purse, whose weight he not unwillingly bears. From sixty to seventy, supported on crutches, he is creeping towards the grave, which is open to receive him, when he shall have accomplished his threescore and ten years.

Thus the designer of Sienna has differed, in detail, from our delightful poet and from the venerable Hebrew Rabbi; but the general intent of all is the same, namely, to moralize on that "vanity of vanities"\*—Human Life.

Several of the early designers have employed themselves on similar themes. Tobias Stimmer, in his clever woodcuts, gives man ten periods of ten years each, making human life extend to a hundred years. Each of his cuts contains two decades, five of men and five of women; the very ornamental leaves are indicative of the changes that years bring with them, and the gradual improvement and decay are marked with a power deserving the praise bestowed by Fuseli on T. Stimmer's compositions.

It were to be wished that Henley had mentioned the name of either the inventor or engraver of the old print referred to in the notes in Johnson's and Steevens's Shakspeare, on Jaques' speech. As it is, we are left quite in the dark as to the age and author of the prints said to have been "stuck up in the generality of houses," at so early a period as before Shakspeare's time. What has become of all these prints? was that of which Steevens says that he

\* The Medrash says, that Rabbi Simon in this verse accounts for the allusion to the Seven Ages of human life thus. The word occurs twice in the plural, which the Rabbi considers as equal to four, and three times in the singular, making altogether seven. "Vanity of Vanities," saith the Preacher; "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity."

could "have *better* spared a *better* print," one of them? Perhaps you, Sir, may be able trace them.

At any rate I feel sure that whatever the merits of those old prints may be, your present work will do honour to the Ages of Shakspeare, not less than to the art itself employed to illustrate them.

I am, Sir, with best wishes for its success,  
Your obedient servant,  
MARIA CALLCOTT.

To these interesting remarks, little more remains than to refer the curious reader to the notes upon the Seven Ages in the last edition of our Author; from whence, as peculiarly applicable, the following passage from an old writer, quoted by Mr. Malone, is derived: —

"Wee are not placed in this world as continuers; for the Scripture saith we have no abiding citie heere, but as travellers and sojourners, whose custome it is to take up a new inne, and to change their lodging, sometimes here, sometimes there, during the time of their travell. Here we walke like plaiers upon a stage, one representing the person of a king, another of a lorde, the third of a plowman, the fourth of an artificer, and so foorth, as the course and order of the enterlude requireth; everie acte whereof beeing plaide, there is no more to doe, but open the gates and dismisse the assemblie.

"Even so fareth it with us: for what other thing is the compasse of this world, beautified with varietie of creatures, reasonable and unreasonable, but an ample and large theatre, wherein all things are appointed to play their pageants, which when they have done, they die and their glorie ceaseth."\*

\* The Diamant of Devotion, by Abraham Fleming, 4to. 1586.

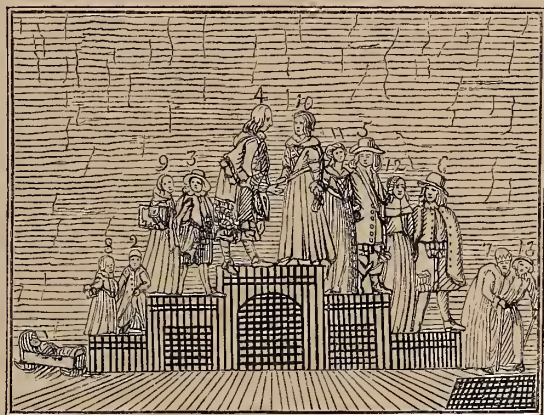
The same subject is thus beautifully treated by Mr. Wordsworth in the Excursion:—

“ This file of infants, some that never breathed  
The vital air; and others, who allow'd  
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,  
Or with too brief a warning, to admit  
Administration of the holy rite  
That lovingly consigns the babe to the arms  
Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.  
These that in trembling hope are laid apart,  
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired  
Till he begins to smile upon the breast  
That feeds him; and the tottering little one  
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose  
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek;  
The thinking thoughtless school-boy; the bold youth  
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid  
Smitten while all the promises of life  
Are opening round her; those of middle age  
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,  
Like pillars fixed more firmly, as might seem,  
And more secure, by very weight of all  
That, for support, rests on them; the decay'd  
And burthensome; and, lastly that poor few  
Whose light of reason is with age extinct;  
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last  
The earliest summon'd and the longest spared,  
Are here deposited——”

No trace can be found of the “ emblematical representations” which Henley states were stuck up in the generality of houses, mentioned by Lady Callcott in her interesting account. Mr. Douce, the most indefatigable commentator on



our great poet, throws no light upon the matter: he mentions a wood-cut illustration in "Comenii Orbis Sensualium Pictus," which, from its representing both sexes, has been faithfully copied from that work, and here presented to the reader.



It is entirely matter of conjecture, what illustrations Steevens alludes to as formerly in his possession, when he states, "I could have better spared a better *print*."

The interesting sketch mentioned in Lady Callcott's essay, and most kindly contributed in illustration of this work by Sir Augustus Callcott, proves that this division of human life early engaged the attention of the painter. The following is a list of a few that have come under the Editor's notice, in addition to those designed by T. Stimmer: in

some cases it will be seen the artist has contented himself with dividing human life into four periods:—

Crispin de Pas, from his own designs, a series of six, with a title-page, with these words, “Ætates hominum secundum anni tempora.” 1559.

Muykens; a series of etchings, from his own designs, divided into ten periods. Circa, 1640.

A. Gillot, engraved by Joullain; four ages.

J. Raoux, engraved by Moyreau; four ages.

C. N. Cochin, after his own designs; four ages.

Bosc, two sets, one a ceiling; four ages.

Goltzius, engraved by Saenredam; four ages.

C. Dusart, from his own designs; four ages.

Lancret (in the National Gallery), engraved by Lar-messin; four ages.

Behnes, engraved on wood, in “The Saturday Magazine.”

Smirke, R.A. in Boydell’s Shakespeare; seven ages.

Stothard, R.A. engraved by Bromley.

Stothard, R.A. on wood, in an edition of Shakespeare, printed by Whittingham, in one volume. 1830.

Green (of Birmingham) on wood, in an edition of Shakespeare, seven volumes, printed by Whittingham. 1816.

---

It remains only to say a few words with reference to this addition to the illustrations of one of the most popular passages in the works of our great poet.

The rapid progress, or perhaps revival of wood-engraving in this country, so remarkable within these few years, may be, in a great degree, attributed to the facility of passing the blocks through the same press that prints the descriptions they illustrate.

The high reputation of the eminent artists who kindly consented to make, in several instances for the first time, the drawings on wood which are now presented, is too well known to be further remarked upon. It was the wish of the projector of this series to obtain the highest talent, hitherto not generally employed in illustrations on wood. To the members of the Royal Academy who have so kindly consented to accede to this wish, his thanks are most gratefully offered. How far they have succeeded in their delineations of this beautiful passage it will be for the public to decide.

To Lady Callcott the Editor begs to return his sincere thanks for the interesting essay prefixed to these remarks. To Sir Augustus Callcott he is greatly indebted for the interest he evinced in the plan, and for many useful suggestions which he afforded him.

William Mulready, Esq. R.A. he takes this opportunity of thanking, for undertaking the very difficult subject which bears his name. It is some gratification to the writer

to know that the consequence of requesting his aid to illustrate "All the World's a Stage," induced him to paint the subject on a more extended scale, which now forms one of the ornaments of the rich collection of modern paintings of Mr. Sheepshanks.

During the progress of this work through the engraver's hands, two of its kind and valuable contributors have "made their exit." John Constable, R.A. and William Hilton, R.A. The interest which the first-named artist took in the trifling affair required of him, is best evinced by the fact that he had made nearly twenty sketches for the "melancholy Jaques," which, by the kindness of C. R. Leslie, Esq. R.A. now accompanies this work; that gentleman having selected the design he judged most appropriate, and careful of the reputation of his deceased friend, took the additional trouble upon himself of transferring it to the wood. Without his assistance, this effort, however trifling, of one of our true painters of English scenery, would not have appeared—a matter which would have caused deep regret to the Editor, in being prevented exhibiting this tribute of respect to the talent and memory of one in whose society he has enjoyed many pleasant hours.

Mr. Hilton's subject was completed but a very short period before death deprived this country of one of its most distinguished artists. The writer of this humble tribute to his memory and grateful acknowledgment of his aid to this undertaking, had the melancholy pleasure of an interview

shortly before his departure, and of hearing him express his satisfaction at the mode in which his subject had been treated ; and he can never forget, in allusion, it is feared, to the sparing patronage his department of art had received, his expression of “ poor fellow ! ”\* in reference to the wishes of a young aspirant desirous of pursuing and cultivating the same branch.

To Mr. Thompson and Mr. Williams, for their anxiety to render their execution of the engravings as perfect as possible, he begs to return his thanks.

JOHN MARTIN.

Woburn Abbey,  
April 21, 1840.

\* It is curious to observe, on the death of these two distinguished artists, the anxiety evinced to secure specimens of works so little sought after in their life-time, for the National Collection. Mr. Constable's picture of the Corn-field was purchased by subscription for three hundred guineas ; and a subscription is now in progress for Mr. Hilton's picture of Sir Calepine, for five hundred guineas.

“ 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 woful 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 lined,  
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 saved, 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.”



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✓ ALL THE WORLD 'S A STAGE.

DESIGNED BY

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ENGRAVED BY

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✓ VIGNETTE on the Title-page.

C. R. LESLIE, ESQ. R. A.

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✓ LAST SCENE OF ALL.

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S. WILLIAMS.

THE END.

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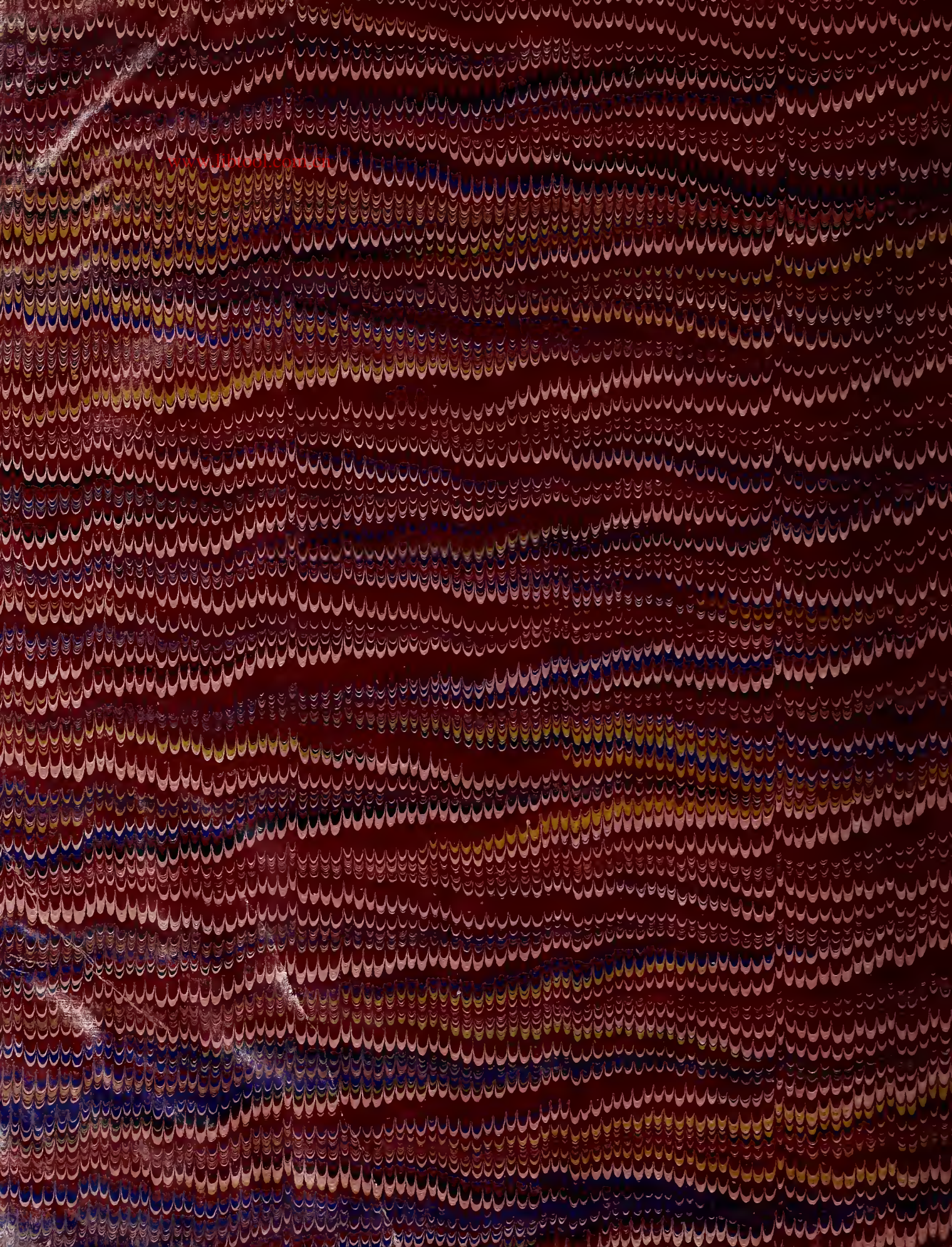
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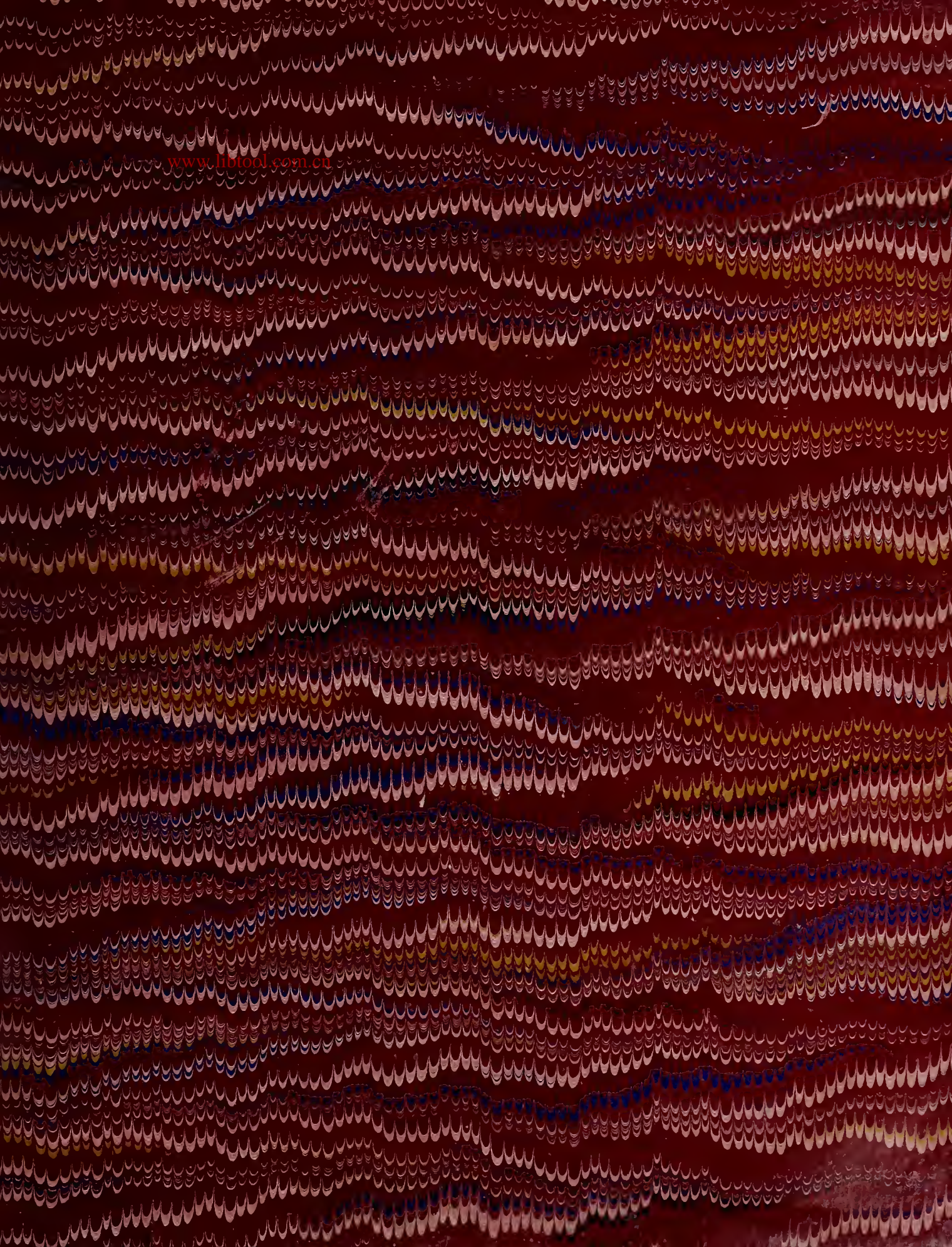
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