

THE
LIFE AND TRANSACTIONS

OF

Mrs Jane Shore,

Concubine to King Edward IV.

CONTAINING

An Account of her Parentage, Wit, and Beauty: her Marriage with Mr SHORE; the King's Visits to her; her going to Court, and leaving her Husband; her great Distress and Misery after the King's Death, &c.



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THE
LIFE AND TRANSACTIONS
OF
Mrs Jane Shore.

MRS JANE SHORE was daughter
Mr Thomas Wainstead, a citizen
good repute, who lived in Cheapsid
by trade a mercer. She being the
only child of her parents, was brought
up with all the care and tenderness
imaginable, not wanting any education
that was proper for her; and her
natural temper, which was very airy
being joined to her education, and the
degree of pride which, as it is natural
some make necessary for the female
sex, helped to set her off to the best
advantage. Fine feathers always make
fine birds; and if the birds are fine
without them, doubtless they make
them doubly so.

This lovely woman was the delight of her father, who clothed her richly, adorning her with jewels ; and, his trade lying among the court-ladies, he often carried her with him to shew her the pastimes which were made frequently there, to divert the queen, &c. which gave her an early longing after a greater gentility than she had ever yet attained to, or her city breeding was fit to produce.

When she grew to the age of fifteen, her competent stock of beauty and good carriage caused many to fall in love with her, and some great lords fixed their eyes upon her, to get her for a mistress, which her father perceiving, sent her to his sister at Northampton, where she remained about a year, till he, supposing the inquiry after her was over, imagined she might return without any hazard of being any further tempted to lewdness. Yet she was no sooner returned, than a plot was laid one night to have her carried

away by Lord Hastings, who, after the death of King Edward, took her for his concubine, as will appear in the close of this history. But the maic he had bribed with gold to get her abroad, repenting of such treachery to her master, gave timely notice, and so prevented it.

Her father perceiving that, unless he took some speedy course, her great stock of beauty would be her ruin, resolved to marry her; so that having surrendered her virginity, and being in the arms of an husband, those that sought to crop her virgin rose would not regard her, but give over their pursuit.

And among those that courted, and earnestly sought her in way of marriage, was one Matthew Shore, a rich goldsmith in Lombard street, whom her father pitched upon as a fit husband and acquainted his fair daughter with his intention to marry her to him; but she appeared very averse to it, sometimes alleging disproportion of years

he being above thirty, at other times; his being disfigured with the small pox; and many other exceptions she made. However, her father's positive commands, and the rich presents her lover made her, won her consent, or seemingly she yielded to the match; and so they were married in great pomp; many of the court, as well as the city, being invited to the wedding, which was kept with great feasting many days.

The wedding being over, and the bridegroom having enjoyed his charming bride, grew exceedingly fond of her, even to dotage; which sickened and palled her love toward him, and he perceiving it, strove to wind himself the more into her affections; and to this end he clothed her very richly, and adorned her with jewels, denying her nothing she desired, or that he thought would tend to her satisfaction or delight.

It was not long before Lord Hastings heard the unwelcome tidings, that his

fairest Jane was married; which, however did not make him give over his purpose of enjoying her fair body; so that he often resorted to see her, treating her at home when her husband was abroad; often inviting them both to court; and took his opportunities to pour out many amorous discourses, endeavouring, by all means, to make her defile the marriage-bed. And one time, intending to try his utmost efforts, he threw her on a bed when they were alone; but she got from him, and ran to her husband, telling him plainly how rude Lord Hastings had been, which, angering Shore, he modestly rebuked him, and forbade him his house, which made him go away in great heat, but resolving to be revenged.

This Lord, being Chamberlain to King Edward IV. having frequently his ear, and finding he was much inclined to fine women, though he was married to Lady Elizabeth Grey, took an opportunity to tell him of Jane Shore's beauty, extolling her wit above her fea-

ures, which made the King hearken to this new adventure, and he resolved to go to Shore's shop in disguise to see her.

The King, whose thoughts still ran on his intended Mistress, delayed not long to pay her a visit; and in order to it, attired himself like a merchant, and withdrew privately from court, being only attended by his page. On coming into Shore's shop, then the richest in all Lombard-street, he found the good man employed in his business; and, waiting till he was a little at leisure, he desired to see some plate, which being shewn him, he, under a pretence of carrying it beyond sea, soon agreed for a considerable quantity: But yet no wife appeared, which made him delay the time with discourse of what was then transacting in England and places abroad, where he said he had travelled.

This delighted Shore mightily, so that he ordered his man to fetch up a bottle of wine, and they drank merrily,

the good man beginning with a health to the King, which the King pledged him in. So when some other healths had passed, the king asked, if there was not a mistress to so fair a house? otherwise, he could help him to a wife, rich, young, and beautiful.

For this offer Shore thanked him, but told him, he was already married to such a one as he described; whom he loved entirely. This discourse made the King more desirous to see her ere he departed, and asked if he could not have a sight of her. Shore, little thinking what was intended for his ruin, and proud of his wife's beauty, soon yielded to his request, and ordered her to be called down, who came attired in a sky-coloured morning gown, flowered with gold, embroidered with pearls and spangles, her head attired with curious lace, under which her hair flowed wantonly, and her blushes made her appear more beautiful.

The King no sooner saw her, but he stepped forth and saluted her coral

lips, impressing on them many balmy kisses. Then she, by her husband's desire, sat down, and the king drank to her; she pledged him, and passed it to her husband. Then much discourse ensued, in which she appeared so witty, that the King resolved to have her at any rate, and so presented her with some curious things. He paid for his plate, which the good man would have sent home, but he refused it, ordering his page to carry it; and with many kisses, he took leave of the charming fair one for that time.

The king had no sooner departed, but Jane asked her husband who that gentleman was that had been so liberal to her? he told her, he said he was a merchant, but he knew him not. Ah! said she, I rather take him for some Lord in disguise; therefore, dear husband, if he should come again, tell him that I am sick, or any thing you can feign to disappoint him.

Mr Shore was greatly pleased at her conduct, and more discourse had

passed, but people coming into the shop about business, she retired.

The King soon arrived at court, where he had been missed by his nobles, soon changed his apparel, and came amongst them with a very cheerful countenance; and though others were ignorant, Hastings well perceived where he had been, and the satisfaction he had received; and no sooner were they in private, but the King said, Well, Hastings, thou hast very good judgment in fine women; I have seen Shore's wife, and she excels the praises you gave her; I like her well, and must enjoy her, but how must I bring it about? to court her in her husband's presence, as a private person, I shall be served as you was; and to do it as a King, will look too low for me—I will not force her from his arms, for that would cause a murmuring among my subjects, who would fear the like by their wives and daughters; but I must have her, and with her own consent.

Hastings smiling, immediately said,

take no care, for this shall be easy to your Majesty; there is one Mrs Blague, your lace-woman, has a house near Shore's, and is very intimate with his wife. This woman is very fond of money, to such a degree, that money would make her do any thing. Her will I engage to do this matter, and trust me she will bring it to pass to your satisfaction. The King liked this device, and it was agreed that he should see her at this Mrs Blague's, and have freedom to court her, but she should not know that he was king, till he thought proper to have it discovered.

Lord Hastings was not idle in promoting his master's happiness, but with gifts and large promises soon made the lace-woman pliable, so that many meetings were made at her house; the King coming in disguise as her friend; and, though Mrs Blague often left them alone, and the King courted her with all his rhetoric, yet she appeared averse to his love, and often blamed him sharply for persuading her to defile her hus-

band's bed ; and then she would chide Mrs Blague for suffering such a rude man to come to her house, telling her the design he had on her chastity ; she seemed very surprised at it, but entertained her to be at ease, for she would not suffer him to come there again any more

This pacified her, but the plot was still deeper laid for her ruin, and at Christmas time she got leave of Mr Shore for his wife to accompany her to the Court, to see the ball there, to which he consented with some unwillingness. And soon after she was introduced, a man of very comely port entered, with a mask on ; and Mrs Shore heard the ladies whisper, *That's the King* ; who looking round through his mask, fixed his eyes upon her, and immediately stepping to her seat, took her out to dance along with him. At this she blushed, but not to be unmannerly, she complied ; and the dance being ended, he took her to a single light, and pulling off his mask to salute

her, she perceived it was the same man whom she had seen at her own shop, and at Mrs Blague's house; and putting a letter into her hand, he retired. She then coming to Mrs Blague, desired to go home; to this she consented, and then read the letter, which was to this purpose:

“ My Lovely Jane,

*“ Your beauty has enthralled my heart,
It is a King sues; you will be kind to
him, and, by a few lines, tell him so to his
comfort.”*

When she read this letter, she left Mrs Blague abruptly, judging she had a hand in the matter.

All this night the fair Jane was restless: her husband inquired the cause, but could not learn it. As soon as she got up, she went to Mrs Blague, to consult what she must do in this strait, well knowing the King's humour.

Mrs Blague, seeing her thus pensive, said, "Come, my dear, you must not be coy, nor deny the King's request. You will glitter so near a throne, and enjoy a gallant bed-fellow. I find he is resolved to have you for a mistress, and therefore it is best for you willingly to submit to him."

At this discourse she trembled, yet considering, from the many attempts her beauty had caused, that it was made to be enjoyed by one, in a favourable hour she consented; and instead of waiting an answer to the King's letter, it was agreed that very night she should take her apparel, and put herself into the hands of the King. This being concluded, Mrs Blague sent the King notice, who sent a chariot for them; and in the meantime her clothes were conveyed away to Mrs Blague's. However, she supped with her husband, when, on a sudden, somebody came on a feigned errand, and said, her mother was taken ill, and desired to

speak with her. He would have gone with her, but she put it off; and giving him the last kiss he ever was to receive from her, she left him, and coming where the chariot stood ready, she and Mrs Blague got into it, and were conveyed to the King's secret apartment, where they found him in his closet. He welcomed them; but it being late, Mrs Blague departed, and they went to bed.

Mr Shore, sitting up late, and his wife not returning, was very much troubled, and went to his mother-in-law's, but they had not seen her, nor was her mother ill, so that her absence troubled the whole family. The next day was spent in seeking for her amongst her relations and friends, but they found her not. Mrs Blague protested she had not seen her, and dropped some dissembling tears, so that her husband was almost distracted, and at last concluded that she was taken away by some courtier; and, in three days after, a lady informed them that she was

with the King. This added more to their grief; they knew not what course to take; and they knew if they went to cross the King it would be their ruin.

They made inquiry, indeed, if it was her voluntary act, and finding it was, and she quite unwilling to leave her new lover, they lost all hope of recovering her, so that Mr Shore growing melancholy, sold off all he had, and went abroad; but having spent his fortune, he returned in a poor condition, and practised clipping and filing gold coin to maintain himself; for which he suffered death in the latter end of King Henry VIII.'s reign.

Jane Shore having rendered up her chastity to the King, pleased with the glittering of a court, and endeared by a monarch's love, was admired by the vulgar, towards whom she behaved in a most courteous manner.

Her power was so great with the King, that when his courtiers durst not intercede for the poor and miserable

that lay under his displeasure, she, with her wit, would so abate his anger, that she saved the lives of very many, both poor and rich. And though she could in a manner do all with him, yet it was never known she used her influence to the prejudice of any. And both in London, and the journeys she made in the country, she would cause poor people to be sought for, and relieved their necessities, inducing and persuading others, who expected any good offices from the King by her means, to do the same, never selling her favours; and by her ready wit, she so baffled the court ladies, who envied her aspiring, that they found themselves unable to repartee. And though the King had another mistress before her, namely Lady Betsy, yet he preferred our heroine much above her, and would often merrily say I have two mistresses, of quite different tempers, one the most religious, and the other the merriest in England: and indeed she was had in great favour all the reign of the

King, having crowds of petitioners waiting at her chamber door, or at the chariot side, when she was to ride abroad, whose suits, to the utmost of her power, she preferred. As for Mrs Blague; least deserved of her, she procured of the King a stately house and manor, worth 280*l.* a year. The Romish priests envied her much, because she sheltered many from their rage and fury, after they had burned John Huss for an heretic.

As no worldly pomp nor greatness is of long continuance, so now her glory was ended, and her days of inexpressible misery began; for the King dying at Westminster, in the fortieth year of his reign, no sooner was he buried in the chapel of his own founding, at Windsor, but Crook-backed Richard, his brother, who murdered Henry VI. and Prince Henry his son, aspiring to the throne, though Edward had left two sons behind him, viz. Edward and Richard, and several daughters, all lawful begotten with the Queen, he quarrelled

with Lord Hastings, (who after the death of the King had taken Jane Shore for his concubine, as now free) because he would not assist him in his wicked project, of making away with his two nephews, whom he afterwards caused to be murdered in the Tower, alleging that the Queen and Shore's wife had bewitched him, shewing his withered arm, which all knew had been so from his cradle; and that Hastings, thinking no excuse them, said, "If they had done so, they ought to be punished." Richard furiously replied, "Thou traitor, dost thou serve me with Ifs? I say, it is a truth very well known to thee, that they have done so, and that I will make good on thy body; wherefore I arrest thee, Lord Hastings, for high treason." And, soon after, he caused his head to be cut off in the Tower.

Jane Shore had no sooner notice of the death of Lord Hastings, her paramour, but she perceived a storm was falling on her own head, therefore she thought it necessary to provide in time,

and so she carried her jewels to her old confident, Mrs Blague, entreating her to conceal them for her ; but she, like a faithless woman, when Jane came and asked for them, not only denied them, but when, in the greatest need she came to crave alms of her, she thrust her out of doors, threatening to have her whipped for her impudence.

Richard, by means aforesaid, having got to the crown, and to make himself seem fair by others' sins, though he was a monster by nature; publicly declaring his mother to be a whore, his brother and his children to be bastards; caused his Queen to be poisoned, and would have wedded his niece. He ordered our Jane Shore to be apprehended, stripped of all she had, and do penance by several times walking in a white sheet, and then walk bare-footed and bare-headed in her shift before the procession, with a cross and wax taper in her hand, through Cheapside, which she did, looking so lovely in her blushes, that many one pitied her; he also

stripped all her friends and relations of whatever they had, pretending they had got it all by her means from the Crown in King Edward's reign; which, with the disgrace their only daughter was fallen into, caused her parents' death.

Richard, not content with this, put out a severe proclamation to this effect: That, on the pain of death and confiscation of goods, no one should harbour her in their houses, nor relieve her with food or raiment. So that she went wandering up and down to find her food upon the bushes, and on the dung-hills, where some friends she had raised would throw bones with more meat than ordinary, and crusts of stale bread, in the places where she generally haunted. And a baker, who had been condemned to die for a riot in King Edward's reign, and saved by her means, as he saw her pass along, in gratitude for her kindness, would trundle a penny loaf after her, which she thankfully received, and blessed him with tears in

her eyes; but some malicious neighbour informing against him, he was taken up and hanged for disobeying King Richard's proclamation, which so terrified others, that they durst not relieve her with any thing; so that, in miserable rags, almost naked, she went about a most shocking spectacle, wringing her hands, and bemoaning her unhappy fate.

Thus she continued till the battle of Bosworth-field, where Richard was slain by Henry Earl of Richmond, who succeeded him by the name of Henry the VII.; in which reign she hoped for better days; but fortune raised her another adversary, for he married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward IV. and King Edward's Queen, who mortally hated her, then bearing a great sway, another proclamation was issued to the same effect; and so she wandered up and down, in as poor and miserable a condition as before, till growing old and utterly friendless, she finished her life in a ditch, which was from thence

alled Shore's Ditch, adjoining Bishops-
gate-street.

Thus you may see the rise and fall
of this once stately, and then unhappy
woman, with whose dying lamentation
shall conclude.

THE

DYING LAMENTATION

OF

MRS JANE SHORE.

Good People,

THOUGH by the rigour of the law you
are forbidden to give me any relief, yet
you may pity my unhappy state, for
the Scripture saith, *That to the miser-*
able pity should be shewn. I am now
putting a period to a miserable life; a
life that I have been long weary of.
Nor would I desire to live in the splen-
dour, pomp, and glory of Edward's
court. No, I am happier now on the
dung-hill than ever I was in his arms.

For, oh! it was an adulterous bed in deed. Oh wretch! that King Edward that ever I was betrayed by him! What floods of sorrow have my sins occasioned? Oh! learn from me, good people, to beware of vain delights; though they promise fair, they leave bitter stings behind them. Alas! you know my punishment is grievous in this world, and so it is, for I have endured a thousand deaths in one; but now, my dying moments are come, I rejoice. Sincere repentance has secured my happiness above. But O, where repentance is not given, what seas of torment rack the soul! O happy dung-hill, how do I embrace thee! From thee my pardoned soul shall soar to heaven, though here I leave this filthy carcass.

O that the name of Shore may be an antidote, to stop the poisonous and foul contagion of raging lust for ever.

FINIS.