

THE
LIFE AND TRANSACTIONS
OF

Mrs. Jane Shore,

Concubine to K. Edward 4th,

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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MRS. JANE SHORE.

MRS. JANE SHORE was daughter to Mr. Thomas Wainstead, a citizen of good repute, who lived in Cheap-side, 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 that 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 supposed the inquiry after her was over, and that 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 car-

ried 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 maid 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, alleging sometimes dispropor-

tion 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 married they were 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 dottage, 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 often he resorted to see her, treating her at home, and her husband 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 K. Edward the 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 features, 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: And 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

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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 still 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 chearful 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 judgement 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. Blauge's, and have freedom to court her, but she should not know that he was the 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 husband'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 surpris'd at it, but entreated 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.

“ 'Tis a King sues ; you will be kind to him,

“ and, by a line, 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 enquired 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 not made to be enjoyed by one, in a fatal hour she consented; and instead of writing 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 mean time 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 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 left 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 K. 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 mo-

narch'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 progresses she made in the country, she would cause poor people to be sought for, and relieve 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 Bessy, yet he pre-

ferred 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, who least deserved of her, she procured of the King a stately house and manor, worth 280*l.* a year. The Romish priests much spited her, because she sheltered many from their rage and fury, after they had burned John Hufs for an heretic.

As no wordly 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 lawfully 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 lord thinking to 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 dunghills, 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 pro-

clamation 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 called Shore's Ditch, adjoining Bishopsgate-street.

Thus you may see the rise and fall of this once stately, and then unhappy woman, with whose dying lamentation I 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 miserable 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 splendour, 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 indeed. 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 carcase.

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

FINIS.

J. Neilson, printer.