

ORIGINAL POETRY; THE BELLE OF BROADWAY

P B'

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She walks in the light of her beauty arrayed,
Like a queen by the hearts of a nation obeyed;
There's a lustre³ around her, a splendor that vies
With the brightest of stars in the bluest of skies.

¹ A prominent poet in the 1800s who also had poems in other journals, such as the *Knickerbocker*.

² Based on an 1840 article in the *Wisconsin Enquirer* (taken from the *New York Sunday Atlas*) which was taken from the *New York Sunday Morning Atlas*. The term "The Belle of Broadway" was originally applied to a woman named Emily who had been raised by a wealthy father and a mother who loved her husband's money. After her father had had enough of her mother's spending and left, the mother continued her spending on luxurious items and her daughter (Emily) caught on to these habits. Emily grew up and "her brain was filled with images of up town palaces, of equipages, of balls, routes and parties that she should give, eclipsing all others." She married a wealthy merchant, not for his money, but because she was in love with him and he was in love with her. He bought her anything that she wanted and allowed her to spend his money however she liked. "She wanted every thing. That which was good for her to-day was insufficient for her to-morrow." Her spending, parties, and luxurious lifestyle gave her the "proud title" of The Belle of Broadway. (The Belle...).

³ Lustre: radiance or brilliance of light; great splendor of accomplishment, beauty, etc.

I've seen her at morning all laughing and gay,
With the step of a fairy bewitching Broadway;
I've seen her at evening all jewels and plumes,
Outflashing⁴ the gas in the brilliantest rooms.

They may talk of Circassia⁵ and sing of Cashmere⁶,
Where the maids are so fair and the shawls are so dear;
But for elegant figures deliciously drest,
The East cannot rival with our land of the West⁷.

And the belle of all belles is the belle of Broadway;
She's as plump as a Venus⁸ and light as a fay;
Her smile – Oh! what rapture its sweetness bestows,
While the blush of her cheek shames the blush of a rose!

If my pen were a diamond whose sparkles would flow
Like the lightning's swift gleam to the paper below,
By the dazzle of words I might hope to convey
Some glance at the charms of the belle of Broadway.

⁴ Outflashing: to surpass in brilliance, outshine

⁵ Country in the northwestern region of the Caucasus near the Black Sea.

⁶ Country in the northwestern region of South Asia; the area is on the northern borders of India and Pakistan and on the southwestern border of China. Today it is known as Kashmir and denotes a much larger area.

⁷ The United States of America in comparison to the luxurious Eastern countries.

⁸ Venus: an ancient Italian goddess of gardens and spring, identified by the Romans with Aphrodite as the goddess of love and beauty.

But Sully⁹ himself would resign in despair
The pencil that pictures the fairest of fair,
Nor attempt in his exquisite style to pourtray
The perfection of grace in the belle of Broadway!

417 *Houston St., March* 10.

P.B.



⁹ Thomas Sully (1783-1872) A famous artist of England who later lived in Philadelphia. He was best known for his portraits of women and was praised by the *Godey's Lady's Book*, another prolific magazine of the antebellum era. (Thomas...).

EDITOR'S NOTE

The article “Original Poetry: The Belle of Broadway” by P. B. was published in *The Broadway Journal* on March 15, 1845. This piece is a comment on the term “Belle of Broadway.” During this time period, this term was used as a title for women who lived lavish lifestyles in a way such that everyone else knew how luxurious their lives were. To the women of these lifestyles, the term was a sign of high praise, but other people were envious and/or disliked these women (The Belle...). The author places a twist on this term by using it to describe a woman for whom he has a high regard. He describes many traits that he admires about the woman, as well as compares her to places and other women. While his high praise for a “Belle of Broadway” woman steers away from its usual usage, the envious tones can be seen through the author’s comparisons between his subject and other women, such as the maids, and places, such as Circassia, Cashmere, and “the East.”

Jessica Edwards



Works Cited

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