

THE PRINCESS ON THE PEA

By Hans Christian Anderson

There was once a Prince who wanted to marry a princess; but she had to be a *real* princess. So he travelled about, all through the world, looking to find a real one; but everywhere he went, there was *something* in the way. There were princess enough, but whether they were *real* princesses he could not quite make out: there was always something that did not seem to be quite right. So he came home again and was quite sad; for he wished so much to have a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on. It lightened and thundered, the rain streamed down; it was quite fearful! Then there was a knocking at the town gate, and the old King went out to open it.

It was a Princess who stood outside the gate. But mercy! How she looked, from the rain and the rough weather! The water ran down from her hair and her clothes; it ran in at the points of her shoes, and out at the heels; and yet she declared that she was a real princess.

'Yes, we will soon find that out,' thought the old Queen. But she said nothing, only went into the bed chamber, took all the bedding off and put a pea on the flooring of the bedstead; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea, and then twenty eiderdown beds upon the mattresses. On this the Princess had to lie all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

"Oh, miserably!" said the Princess. "I scarcely closed my eyes all night long. Goodness knows what was in my bed. I lay upon something hard, so that I am black and blue all over. It was quite dreadful!"

Now they saw that she was a real princess, for through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eiderdown beds she had felt the pea. No one but a real princess could be so delicate.

So the Prince took her for his wife, for now he knew that he had a true princess; and the pea was put in the museum, and it is there now, unless somebody has carried it off.

Look you, this is a true story.