



The Princess and the Pea

There was once a prince who wanted to marry a princess. But she must be a real princess, mind you. So he traveled all round the world, seeking such a one, but everywhere something was in the way. Not that there was any lack of princesses, but he could not seem to make out whether they were real princesses; there was always something not quite satisfactory. Therefore, he returned home again, quite disappointed, for he wished so much to marry a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came. It thundered and lightened, and the rain poured down; indeed, it was quite fearful. In the middle of the storm came a knock at the town gate, and the old king went out to open it.

It was a princess who stood outside. But O dear, what a state she was in from the rain and bad weather! The water dropped from her hair and clothes, it ran in at the tips of her shoes and out at the heels; yet she insisted she was a real princess.

“Very well,” thought the old queen; “we will soon see.” She said nothing, but went into the bedchamber and took off all the bedding, then laid a pea on the bed. Having done this, she took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea and placed twenty duvets on top of the mattresses.

The princess lay upon this bed all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

“Oh, most miserably!” she said. “I hardly closed my eyes the whole night through. I cannot think what could have been in the bed. I lay upon something so hard that I am quite black and blue all over. It is dreadful!”

It was now quite evident that she was a real princess, since through twenty mattresses and twenty duvet beds she had felt the pea. None but a real princess could have such delicate feeling.

So the prince made her his wife, because he knew that she was a true princess. And the pea was preserved in the cabinet of curiosities, where it is still to be seen unless some one has stolen it.

And this, mind you, is a real story.

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