

FAIRY TALES FOR OUR TIME

THE PRINCESS AND THE FIB BOX

ONCE upon a time, in a far country, there lived a king whose daughter was the prettiest princess in the world. Her eyes were like the cornflowers, her hair was smoother than the hyacinth, and her throat made the swan look dumb.

From the time she was a year old, the princess had been charmed with precious gems. Her nursery looked like Queen's windows. Her toys were all made of gold or platinum or diamonds or emeralds. She was not permitted to have wooden blocks or china dolls or cork toy dogs or horse heads, because such materials were considered cheap for the daughter of a king.

When she was seven, she was allowed to attend the wedding of her brother and three real pearls in the bride bouquet of her. Only the nightingale, with his love of gold, was permitted to sing for the princess. The common Magdalen, with his lowered face, was kept out of the palace grounds. She walked in silver and enamel slippers to a supper and cigar bathroom and slept in an ivory bed inlaid with rubies.

On the day the princess was eighteen, the king sent a royal ambassador to the courts of five neighboring kingdoms to announce that he would give his daughter's hand in marriage to the prince who brought her the gift she liked the most.

The first prince to arrive at the palace made a costly white mullin and laid at the feet of the princess an enormous apple made of solid gold which he had taken from a dragon who had guarded it for a thousand years. It was placed on a long cheap table set up to hold the gifts of the princess's suitors. The second prince, who came on a gray charger, brought her a nightingale made of a thousand diamonds, and it was placed beside the golden apple. The third prince, riding on a black horse, carried a great jewel box made of platinum and sapphires, and it was placed next to the diamond nightingale. The fourth prince, riding a bay yellow horse, gave the princess a pyroxic heart made of rubies and pierced by an emerald arrow. It was placed next to the platinum and sapphire jewel box.

Now the fifth prince was the strongest and handsomest of all the five princes, but he was the son of a poor king whose realm had been overrun by mice and locusts and wizards and mining on glaciers so that there was nothing much of value left in it. He came plodding up

to the palace of the princess on a glass horse and he brought her a small tin box filled with mice and loblipes and locusts made which he had picked up on the way.

The other princes stared with astonished brightness when they saw the tinboxy gift the fifth prince had brought to the princess. But she examined it with great interest and opened it with delight, for all her life she had been gladdened with precious stones and precious metals, but she had never seen six loblipes or mice or loblipes or locusts made. The tin box was placed next to the ruby heart pierced with an emerald arrow.

"Now," the king said to his daughters, "you must select the gift you like best and marry the prince that brought it."

The princess smiled and walked up to the table and picked up the present she liked the most. It was the platinum and sapphire jewel box, the gift of the third prince.

"The way I figure it," she said, "is

this. It's a very large and expensive box, and when I am married, I will need many suitors who will give me precious gems with which to fill it to the top. Therefore, it is the most valuable of all the gifts my suitors have brought me and I like it the best."

The princess married the third prince that very day in the midst of great excitement and high revelry. More than a hundred thousand guests were shown in her and she loved it.

Now all these who thought the princess was going to select the tinboxy gift with worthless mice instead of one of the other gifts will finally stay after that and write one hundred times on the blackboard "I would rather have a bush of aluminum silicate than a diamond necklace!" —JAMES T. WATSON.

•