



THE EMPEROR'S
NEW CLOTHES



BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON

“It’s about truth, conviction,
and being valuable.”

MANY, MANY YEARS AGO lived an emperor, who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all his money in order to obtain them -- his only concern was to be always well dressed. He did not care for his soldiers and the theatre did not amuse him. The only thing, in fact, he thought anything of was to drive about and show himself off in a new suit of clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day and as one would say of a king “He is in his council chamber,” so one could say of him, “The emperor is in his dressing-room.”

The great city where he resided was merry and gay. Every day many strangers from all parts of the world arrived. One day two swindlers came to this city having people believe they were weavers, and declared they could manufacture the finest cloth to be imagined. Their colors and patterns, they said, were not only exceptionally beautiful, but the clothes made of their material possessed the wonderful quality of being invisible to any man who was unfit for his office or unpardonably stupid.

“That must be wonderful cloth,” thought the emperor. “If I were to be dressed in a suit made of this cloth I should be able to find out which people in my empire were unfit for their places, and I could distinguish the clever from the stupid. I must have this cloth woven for me without delay.” And he gave a large sum of money to the swindlers, in advance, that they should set to work without any loss of time.

They set up two looms and pretended to be very hard at work, but they actually did nothing at all. They asked continually for the finest silk and the most precious gold cloth, keeping all

they received for themselves while working at the empty looms till late at night.

“I should very much like to know how the weavers are getting on with the cloth,” thought the emperor. But he felt rather uneasy when he remembered that he who was not fit for his office could not see it. Personally, he was of the opinion he had nothing to fear, yet he thought it safer to send somebody else first to see how matters stood. Everybody in the town knew what a remarkable quality the stuff possessed, and all were anxious to see how stupid their neighbors might be.

“I shall send my honest old minister to the weavers,” thought the emperor. “He can judge best how the stuff looks, for he is intelligent, and nobody is better fit for his office than he.”

The good old minister went into the room where the swindlers sat before the empty looms. “Heaven preserve us!” he thought, and opened his eyes wide, “I cannot see anything at all.”

But he did not say so.

Both swindlers requested him to come near. “Do you not admire the exquisite pattern and beautiful colors?” one of them asked, sweeping his hand across the empty loom.

The poor old minister tried his very best, but he could see nothing, for there was nothing to be seen. “Oh dear,” he thought, “can I be so stupid? I should never have thought so, and nobody must know it! Is it possible that I am not fit for my office? No, no, I cannot say that I was unable to see the cloth.”

“Have you got nothing to say?” said the other swindler, pretending to be busily weaving.

“Oh, it is very pretty. Exceedingly beautiful,” replied the old minister looking through his

glasses. “What a beautiful pattern, what brilliant colors! I shall tell the emperor that I like the cloth very much.”

“We are pleased to hear that,” said one of the poseurs. And he went on describing to the minister each of the colors in the non-existent cloth, explaining in detail its curious pattern. The old minister listened very carefully. He wanted to be sure he could repeat to the emperor the description the swindlers shared.

And that he did.

Soon after, the swindlers asked for more money, silk, and gold cloth as though it were needed for their work to continue. Instead, they kept everything for themselves, using not a thread as they kept up their appearance of weaving at the empty loom.

In due time, the emperor sent another honest official from his court to see how the weavers were getting on with the cloth. Like the old minister, he looked and looked but saw nothing, as there was nothing to be seen.

“Is it not a beautiful piece of cloth?” asked one of the swindlers, showing and explaining the magnificent pattern that did not exist.

“I am not stupid,” thought the man. “It is

therefore my important court position for which I am not fit. It is very strange, but I must not let any one know it.” He praised the cloth which he did not see, and expressed his joy at the beautiful colors and the fine pattern which did not exist.

“It is wonderful,” he told the emperor.

Everybody in the whole town talked about the precious cloth. And, at last the emperor wished to see it himself, while it was still on the loom. With a number of his chosen men, including the two who had already been there, he went to visit the imposters; who now worked as hard as they could, with not a thread.

“Is it not magnificent?” said the two statesmen who had been there before. “Your Majesty must admire the colors and the pattern.” And they pointed to the empty looms, for they imagined the others could see the cloth which they themselves could not.

“What is this?” thought the emperor. “I do not see anything at all. How terrible! Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be emperor? That would indeed be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me.”

“Really,” he said, turning to the weavers, “your

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cloth has our most gracious approval.” And nodding confidently he looked at the empty loom, being sure not to let anyone know he saw nothing.

All his attendants who were with him looked and looked, and although they could not see anything more than the others, they declared, like the emperor, “It is very beautiful.” And all advised him to have clothes made of this magnificent new cloth and to wear those clothes in the great procession which was soon to take place.

“This is wonderful! Beautiful! Superb!” one heard them say. Everyone seemed to be delighted, so the emperor appointed the two swindlers Weavers of the Imperial Court.

Throughout the night previous to the day on which the procession was to take place, the swindlers pretended to work, burning more than sixteen candles. People were to see that they were busy finishing the emperor’s new clothes. They pretended to take the cloth from the loom and worked about in the air with big scissors, sewing with needles without thread. At last they said, “The emperor’s new clothes are ready.”

The emperor and all his barons then came to the hall where the swindlers held their arms up as if they held something in their hands and said, “These are the trousers! Here is the coat! Here is the cloak!” and so on. “They are all as light as a cobweb. One must feel as if one had nothing at all upon the body and that is just the beauty of them.”

“Indeed!” said all the emperor’s men.

But they could see nothing, for there was nothing to be seen.

“Does it please your Majesty now to graciously undress,” said the swindlers, “that we may assist your Majesty in putting on the new clothes before the grand mirror?”

The emperor undressed and the swindlers pretended to put the new clothes upon him, one piece after another, as the emperor looked at

himself in the mirror from every side.

“How wonderful they look! How well they fit!” said all. “What a beautiful pattern! What fine colors! That is a magnificent suit of clothes!”

The master of the ceremonies announced that the bearers of the emperor’s canopy, which was to be carried in the procession, were ready.

“I am ready,” said the emperor. “Are not my clothes marvelous?” Then he turned around once more before the mirror so the people should think he admired his garments.

The chamberlains, who were to carry the train, put their hands to the ground as if they lifted up a train and pretended to hold something in their hands. They would not let anyone know they could see nothing.

With the beautiful canopy above him, the emperor marched along in the procession. All who saw him in the street and out of the windows exclaimed, “Indeed, the emperor’s new clothes are incomparable! How splendid they are! How well they fit! And what a wonderful train!” Nobody wished to let others know they saw nothing, for then they would appear stupid and unfit for their posts.

Never were the emperor’s clothes more admired.

“But he has nothing on at all,” said a young child at last.

“Good heavens! Listen to the voice of an innocent child,” said the father. And one person whispered to another what the child had said.

“But he has nothing on at all,” everyone began to shout.

That shook the emperor, for it seemed to him they were right. “Even so,” he thought to himself, “I must continue until the end.”

And the emperor held himself still more proudly, and the chamberlains walked with even greater dignity, as they proceeded to carry the train which did not exist.

 **THE END** 