

If the heard were all, a goat might preach

Meaning: Beard is a sure sign of manhood. But it is no indicator of wisdom.

Alternatives: If you think that to grow a beard is to acquire wisdom, a goat is at once a complete Plato.

A prudent youth is superior to a stupid old man.

Illustrative Story:

Peter the Great was the Tsar of Russia. He was a fan of the beard. He sported a thick beard. So did all his courtiers .

Even the diplomats posted at Peter's court grew beards. That was one sure way of being in Peter's good books.

England's ambassador at Peter's court retired. The search for a successor began in London. Many names were proposed .

Each name was critically examined. The final choice fell on Ponsonby.

"Is this the right choice?" many Englishmen wondered. For Ponsonby, though bright and intelligent, was rather young .

And he did not sport a beard.

Some friends told him, "Grow a beard." Ponsonby turned down the advice. "Why should I cover up my cheeks and chin with hairy growth ?

Only Jupiter needs the beard to look his part. I think I am quite handsome without the beard," he replied.

Ponsonby sailed for Russia, travelled by road and finally reached 49

Moscow. At the appointed hour, he reported at Peter's Court. He was received by the protocol officer and led to the presence of Peter .

Ponsonby bowed politely to the Tsar, stood up, moved closer and presented his papers .

Peter received the papers, politely thanked Ponsonby and then examined the new ambassador from head to foot.

His eyes gained a hard glint. He stomped the pedestal with his foot and sneered, "So England has sent a boy to our court"?

Hushed silence greeted the comment. What lay behind the comment? Some courtiers got the meaning .

Peter was annoyed because Ponsonby did not sport a beard.

"Oh great King! My Monarch sends his greetings to you," Ponsonby spoke without the slightest touch of annoyance .

I am here at my monarch's command. I do not know if my King would have sent me if he had known your preference ". . .

Ponsonby paused and smiled at Peter. Peter scowled. Furrows lined his forehead. Ponsonby quietly continued ",

If my King had known your preference, he would have sent a goat to your Majesty's court.



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