

# Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad?

by WB Yeats

Why should not old men be mad?  
Some have known a likely lad  
That had a sound fly-fisher's wrist  
Turn to a drunken journalist;  
A girl that knew all Dante once  
Live to bear children to a dunce;  
A Helen of social welfare dream,  
Climb on a wagonette to scream.  
Some think it a matter of course that chance  
Should starve good men and bad advance,  
That if their neighbours figured plain,  
As though upon a lighted screen,  
No single story would they find  
Of an unbroken happy mind,  
A finish worthy of the start.  
Young men know nothing of this sort,  
Observant old men know it well;  
And when they know what old books tell  
And that no better can be had,  
Know why an old man should be mad.