

even failing seems preferable to continued study at this stage.

April 29: written papers

Off down to London. Meet ashen faced colleagues in similar stage of fugue. Sit down in allocated place and realise from photo how dramatically appearance has changed since first sitting the Exam (i.e. older, more haggard). Turn over the Exam paper and attempt to remain conscious. None of the hotly predicted essay questions appear . . . move on to short answers, and feel that have revised totally the wrong topics . . . rush through the MCQs desperately looking for a question that is recognisable . . . wonder whether to commit suicide before or after the Clinical.

May 11: Clinicals

Patient co-operative and helpful, but imagine examiners writing "FAIL" on the forms.

June

Go on holiday to miss the results. Despondent to see big fat envelope on the doormat and assume that it contains more re-application forms. Feel profoundly shocked to see that the College only want another sum of money to allow me to use the letters "MRC Psych" after my name . . .

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 POEM

There's a lot of it about

Tim Bleach

Whenever patients summon a physician
For painful symptoms or a weak condition
The simple comfort of a definition
That signals fever, spasm, dose, or bout,
Relieves the burdened mind of high anxiety
And labels illness with a due propriety
(The patient still a part of broad society)
For, really, there's a lot of it about.

Better to have angina or arthritis,
Or piles or non-specific urethritis,
Advanced tuberculosis or bronchitis,
Bubonic plague or scrofula or gout,
Than more mysterious maladies of mind
Wherein the inner eye is rendered blind
And highly-trained psychiatrists may find
That, really, there's a lot of it about.

But when a man is mad and hyper-manic
It tends to trigger off our latent panic
Or make us sense such people as Satanic
(Perhaps these things are better in than out);
It frequently must seem a great deal easier
If paranoia teams up with amnesia
Whether in Spain or Scotland or Silesia
For, really, there's a lot of it about.

If, for some reason, men become moronic
Or make a weak response to purge or tonic
Or simply sit in corners, catatonic,
Or dance à la St Vitus with a shout,
Whether the place is Balham or Belgravia
They either need an expert or a saviour
To rectify experience or behaviour
For, really, there's a lot of it about.

TIM BLEACH