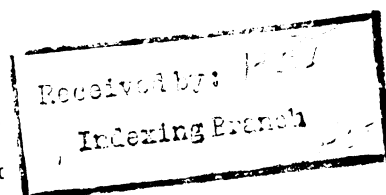




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### Poverty and gentility

The publication last week of *The Health of the Nation* may prove to be a major advance in improving the health of the English or simply an addition to dusty shelves. A news item summarises the report (p 135), and John Gabbay welcomes it in an editorial (p 129). Critics have concentrated on the fact that the report makes no mention of poverty, and the suspicion that the government is not serious about acting on poverty was strengthened when it tried to sneak out a damning report on the failure of the social fund while attention was focused on *The Health of the Nation*. The authors of the report on the social fund conclude that it is not meeting its objective of concentrating "attention and help on those applicants facing greatest difficulties in managing on their income" (p 138). If poverty worsens then it's unlikely that the English health strategy will be able to meet its targets.

Poverty and health strategies were both topics that came up at the annual representative meeting of the BMA in Nottingham, along with a host of other medicopolitical issues (p 189). The meeting now lasts four days, but it used to last a fortnight—with greater attention than now on the scientific and social side. An extract from the journal of 100 years ago describes a time when the BMA met before in Nottingham (p 172). In an excursion of unalloyed pleasure the party of the association travelled to Belvoir Castle. "His Grace the Duke of Rutland most hospitably entertained the company at luncheon in the noble dining room of the Castle"—without actually being present. Undeterred, the company drank his health with enthusiasm and then drove in perfect sunshine for tea with Sir William and Lady Welby. Such days are surely gone for ever, but poverty remains.

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