

3rd and 4th OCTOBER

Kierkegaard's condition deteriorates. Weakness in the legs is increasing and it is causing him difficulty in standing and walking. When he sits down he collapses to one side. Kierkegaard still has sensory disorders in the form of formication in the legs. He is no longer capable of lifting his legs when lying down. The only thing he is capable of is to curl up his legs under him. He complains of pains. On the whole a predominance of symptoms is observed on the left-hand side. His urination is still not as it should be. He has no fever. Kierkegaard's chest was examined from the front using percussion, and here nothing abnormal was found. PERCUSSION and auscultation were not carried out from behind. Kierkegaard's spine was examined and nothing abnormal was found here (either). We have been informed that Kierkegaard has been taking a sedative. The preparation was 'infusio valerianae officinalis', which is an extract of valerian root. By all accounts Kierkegaard's DIET was altered, since now the so-called 'half-best care' was prescribed.

PERCUSSION. No stethoscopy of Kierkegaard's lungs was undertaken from behind. This examination would have been relevant in Kierkegaard's case, and since we know that that Trier's ward was famous for its technical skill in this field the omission seems strange. It raises of course the question as to whether the medical-historical characterization of Trier as a conscientious doctor is correct. This is another story, and too complicated to touch on here. The most central issue for us is whether the rest of the contents of Kierkegaard's case-book prove Trier to be a conscientious doctor. I think that it does. It therefore remains a mystery why the above-mentioned examination of Kierkegaard was not carried out.

DIET. In 'Rules for Medical Care at Det kongelige Frederiks Hospital' it emerges that one drew distinctions between the following kinds of diet: 'Ordinary Care', 'Best Care', 'Fever Diet', as well as 'Half Fever Diet'. The so-called best care was something a patient could obtain by an 'Extra prescription' prescribed by a doctor and on payment of cash! Half-best care was accordingly half of the dietary ration.

As an example we may consider Kierkegaard's lunch. It consisted of the following on each day of the week: 4 lod (32 grams) of wheat bread, 1 lod (8 grams) of butter and ¼ pægl (½ decilitre!) of milk. Like all other patients Kierkegaard had scales in his ward. Here he could check whether the hospital staff had misappropriated his food¹⁷.