

# DEATH OF DR. EDWARD SEGUIN.

## SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE CELEBRATED SPECIALIST.

Dr. Edward Seguin, the celebrated specialist in the treatment of idiocy and allied nervous diseases, died yesterday at his residence, No. 41 West Twentieth-street, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. Dr. Seguin was a son of T. O. Seguin, and was a native of Clamecy, France, where he was born on Jan. 20, 1812. He was educated at the Colleges of Auxerre and St. Louis, Paris, and at the outset of his professional life began the formation of a system for the physiological training and education of idiots, a work which occupied a great deal of his time and attention, and of which he was up to the day of his death the recognized leader. In 1837 he undertook the treatment of an idiotic boy, in the study of whose case he benefited from the advice of Itard and Esquirol, his teachers. Before 1839 Dr. Seguin instituted the first school for idiots, which was the parent establishment of 75 institutions for idiots since opened in civilized countries. Of these, the 11 schools in the United States which he helped to organize are believed to be the most prosperous. Shortly after the revolution of 1848 Dr. Seguin came to this country, spending the ensuing 10 years in Ohio, at first in Cleveland and latterly in Portsmouth. He subsequently revisited France, and on returning to the United States settled in this City, where he completed his studies, graduating an M. D. at the University College in 1861. A year later he was elected a member of the American Medical Association. In 1866 he began to devote much of his time to a special study of animal heat, which enabled him to make valuable additions to the fund of knowledge on that subject, and which led to his invention of important instruments specially adapted to thermography. His collected writings are regarded as constituting in themselves an excellent working library. "Hygiene et Education des Idiots," 1843; "Images Graduées a l'Usage des Enfants Arriérés et Idiots;" "Traitement Moral Hygiene. et Education des Idiots et des autres Enfants Arriérés," 1846; J. R. Perelre, Premier Instituteur des Sourds et Muets en France," 1847; "Historical notice of the Origin and Progress of the Treatment of Idiots," translated by Dr. J. S. Newberry, 1852; "Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method," revised by a son of the author, Dr. E. C. Seguin, in 1868; "New Facts and Remarks Concerning Idiocy," 1870; "Medical Thermometry," 1871; "Prescription and Clinic Records," 1865-77; "Mathematical Tables of Vital Signs," 1865-77; "Thermometres Physiologiques, Manual of Thermometry for Mothers, Nurses, Teachers," &c., 1873; "Official Report on Education at the Vienna Exhibition of 1873," published in 1875; "International Uniformity in the Practice and Records of Physic," and "Medical Thermometry and Human Temperature," 1876. At the time of his death Dr. Seguin was President of the American Association of Medical Officers, having charge of institutions for the education of idiots. His funeral will take place from his late residence on Sunday afternoon.

Dr. Seguin's career in the literature of medicine, and particularly in that of psychological medicine, has been one of more than ordinary brilliancy. Endowed by nature with a sympathetic and sensitive temperament, conjoined to fine powers of analysis, his later professional life was devoted almost exclusively to the educational treatment of idiocy and allied diseases. His work on the education of idiots, although published some years ago, still holds place as a classic in medical literature, and has passed through several editions. In it he distinguishes clearly between the stolid forms of idiocy arising from poverty, innutrition, and like causes, and those more interesting forms in which mental eclipse is conjoined to extraordinary development of some single faculty—such as music, drawing, or mathematics, cases of the latter usually occurring in families in good circumstances, as consequences of a group of causes not often illustrated in the lower grades of society. His interest in educational institutions and his acquirements in the history and science of the subject led to his appointment as United States Commissioner on Education at the Vienna Exposition in 1873. He spent nearly a year in Europe, principally in the various educational centres, studying the *salles d'asyle* of France and the kindergarten schools of Germany in their latest aspects. He even peered closely into the methods pursued in European schools for deaf mutes, comparing them with American, and bringing to bear upon the criticism of the subject a special knowledge of the physiology of deaf mutism which rendered his brief dissertation a valuable contribution to science. On his return he issued a report of some 200 pages, which has gone through several editions. His studies of the *salle d'asyle* and the kindergarten in Europe led to the memoir on "Garden Schools" recently read before the New-York Academy of Sciences, in which he proposed to incorporate with our existing public school system a method of outdoor training, to develop alike the muscles, the special senses, and the intellectual faculties, by means of natural history studies at the Park. The essay met with a cordial reception by the Academy, but such reforms are only to be brought about by persistent agitation, and little popular interest was awakened. Of late years, also, Dr. Seguin was one of the leaders of the movement for the introduction of the metric system, having contributed half a dozen brief memoirs to the literature of what is styled medical uniformity. As one of the delegates from the American Medical Association, Dr. Seguin was instrumental in obtaining the appointment of a committee to investigate the feasibility of the introduction of the system as a part of the language of science in Great Britain. He also represented the association at the International Medical Congress for three successive years—1876, 1877, and 1878—and was a prolific contributor to the three volumes of transactions. One of his most recent and valuable memoirs was that contributed to the transactions of the American Medical Association at the last meeting. The paper was based upon two cases of idiocy treated upon the plan of arousing the dormant intellect and developing the stunted brains by means of manual and optical training—education in voluntary movements, first by imitation of the movements of an instructor, and finally proceeding to movements self-originated by force of habit. The article was entitled the "Physiological Training of the Idiotic Hand," and marked a departure from current theories in the doctrine that the peripheral nerves, not the brain, furnish the starting-point of many of our most complex ideas and sentiments. He subsequently married the lady to whose intelligent co-operation he was indebted for his success in these cases.