

THOMAS C. THEAKER.

The Hon. Thomas C. Theaker, who has just been appointed by President Johnson Commissioner of Patents, is emphatically a self-made man. His education—eminently qualifying him for the honorable and responsible position he now occupies—has been acquired in the workshop. Though a practical mechanic, of great and varied experience, he has all his life aimed at something higher than mere practical skill as an artisan, and has made himself a proficient in the science of mechanics. He is an inventor, also, and has, previous to his official connection with the Patent Office, taken out several patents for ingenious and useful improvements in the mechanic arts.



HON. THOMAS C. THEAKER.

Mr. Theaker was born on the first of February, 1812, in York County, Pennsylvania. In 1830, when eighteen years of age, he removed with his father's family to Belmont County, Ohio. Soon afterward he became a house carpenter and joiner, commencing his apprenticeship to the business in Zanesville, Ohio, and concluding it in Wheeling, Virginia. While still quite young, he learned, also, the art of machine pattern making. Subsequently he became a skillful millwright, which business he successfully followed a number of years in various parts of Ohio. About twenty years ago, Mr. Theaker established an engine and machine shop at Bridgeport, Belmont County, Ohio, and carried on the business some twelve or fifteen years, giving all the various branches of work there done his personal supervision, and becoming master of all.

In the fall of 1858, Mr. Theaker was elected to Congress from the Belmont district, and was a member of the House of Representatives during the two stormy sessions which immediately preceded the breaking out of the late rebellion.

On the incoming of Mr. Lincoln's Administration, he was strongly recommended by numerous members of Congress with whom he had served, and others, for the office to which he has just been appointed; but, on the accession of Mr. Holloway to that place, he accepted an appointment tendered him by the President on the Board of Examiners-in-Chief, which had just been created by an act of Congress. In that capacity, as most of our readers are aware, he has served with ability ever since.

Mr. Theaker's past history gives an assurance to that valuable class of our fellow-citizens with whom the great majority of useful inventions originate—the mechanics, artisans and workingmen—that his sympathies will always be with them, and that the interests of inventors will be safe in his hands.

Aluminum.

Dr. N. C. Fowler, of Yarmouth, who has been experimentally working in aluminum for several years, exhibits, at the Boston Fair, many articles of dentistry and ornamental work fabricated from that new material. His specimens were reduced from Cape Cod clay by himself, and attest in a remarkable manner the hardness and strength, as well as the light-

ness and material, of this singular metal, the processes of working which are in such singular contrast with the methods of treating other minerals. It is not oxidizable, and its specific gravity is below that of rubber, 25 sheets of aluminum, which Dr. Fowler exhibits, weighing but five-eighths of a grain, while the same number of gold sheets of equal size weigh six grains. Some beautiful specimens of embossing with this material are shown.—*Boston Advertiser.*

[Aluminum is less readily attacked by acids than most metals, but it is not strictly true that it is not oxidizable. A considerable portion of every brick wall and every bank of clay is the oxide of aluminum. Clay is the silicate of alumina—silica and alumina—and alumina is the oxide of aluminum.—Eds. Sci. Am.]

On the 4th inst., a rope swinging from a water tank on the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, by a curious result of the laws of motion, wound itself around the neck of N. W. Danks, of Chicago, who was standing on the platform of a car looking off, and as the train dashed by he was jerked off and hung suspended till the train passed by, when the rope unwound and he fell to the ground insensible, but was restored to consciousness. So relates a Chicago paper.

In a vacuum, all electrified bodies speedily lose their excitement, while in a dry, dense air, they retain it longest. Nevertheless, slight electrical excitement can be produced in a vacuum by friction.

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