

JOSEPH WHITAKER.

1789—1870.

Joseph Whitaker, the sixth child, was born March 29, 1789, and grew to early manhood amid the adverse surroundings which have just been described. As a boy he peeped into the dough trough to see whether there was bread enough for the frugal meal. The only education he ever received was obtained from a short attendance at a night school; though in the course of a long business experience he obtained a competent knowledge of grammar, arithmetic and accounts. He became an expert wood-chopper, and the first half dollar he ever owned was given to him, when a boy of about sixteen, by his employer, as a reward for having cut and piled more wood in a day than any of the others so engaged. He broke stone on the pike between Philadelphia and Reading; but he never learned to swim. Upon one occasion he fell into a charcoal pit and was only saved from being burned to death by quickly catching his fork across the top of the pit and then pulling himself out, scorched but not seriously hurt. In such a household swarming became a necessity. In 1808 he followed his oldest brother James, who had learned the trade of a smith, and who was later the managing partner of the firm of Keim, Whitaker & Co., of Reading, to Philadelphia, and began to make nails by hand at the corner of Fourth Street and Old York Road. The first Sunday after his arrival he walked all around the city, in order, as he said, to see for himself how large it was. He boarded with Elizabeth Adams, widow of Samuel Adams, who came of a well-to-do New Jersey family, and whose father, Joseph, had