DR. GOUCHER TELLS HOW HE WON LINCOLN'S BLESSING*

"Love God, obey your parents, serve your country and the world will never forget you." This was the message that President Abraham Lincoln gave to a boy on the eve of his first inauguration. That boy was John Franklin Goucher, later founder of Goucher College, Baltimore. This is the way Dr. Goucher tells the story:

"Lincoln passed through Pittsburgh and stayed at the old Monongahela House on his way to Washington for his first inauguration. Of course, all the boys in the town vied with each other as to who could get nearest the President-elect. I was just a little fellow at the time, frail and delicate, and the youngest of three boys. My older brothers got permission of my father at the breakfast table to go up to the hotel and see if they could get a glimpse of Lincoln.

"Of course, when I knew they were going I had to go—but they wouldn't let me. My eldest brother said I was too little and might get trampled by the crowds. My father just smiled and didn't say anything. I knew by his smile that he intended taking me himself. But I didn't want to go with him. He was a leisurely gentleman of the old school and I was afraid I wouldn't see anything. So I persuaded him to let me go alone.

Followed the Crowd In.

"When I got to the hotel there was a big crowd around it. The Mayor and City Councilmen were marching in to pay their respects to the President-elect. That was what I had come for and I didn't see any reasons why I shouldn't pay my respects when they did. As we were marching in the Councilman ahead of me turned around and looked at the little child in back, but—as I seemed so perfectly unconcerned—I supposed he thought I belonged to the man in back. And the man in back was probably placing me with the man in front. Anyway, no one stopped me.

*Dr. Goucher was the son of Dr. John M. Goucher, a Pittsburgh physician, who at the time that Lincoln passed through the city, lived with his family at the northwesterly corner of Fifth Street, now Fifth Avenue, and Cherry Alley.
“I followed the procession into the President-elect’s private parlor, where he received them, and listened to the Mayor’s speech. I caught a few words of his reply, saw him shake hands with a number of the men, and then, with a farewell smile for his guests, he retired into an inner room. The Councilmen filed out. As I had come in with them, I thought it best to go out with them—but first I wanted to get a nearer view of that wonderful man whose kindly smile had thrilled me—child as I was.

“I stepped to the door of his inner room. Lincoln’s life had been attempted several times, and, probably with his nerves keyed to an emergency, the President turned around. When he had been speaking to the Councilmen Lincoln’s face had been all smiles; those wonderful eyes of his lighted with an inner glow. I was only a child, but something gripped my heart as I caught sight of his face when he thought he was alone.

His Sadness Disappears.

I have never seen such ineffable sadness on the face of any human being. All the sorrows of the world were reflected in his kind eyes. Seeing a little child his face softened marvelously.

“I stuck out my hand as I had seen the Councilmen do and said as I had heard them say: ‘It is a great pleasure to shake hands with you, Mr. President.’

“His smile was like benevolent sunshine. He took my hand with both his big, warm ones and, looking down into my face, he said: ‘God bless you, my son; love God, obey your parents, serve your country and the world will never forget you.’

“I never saw him again, not until I was a student in Harrisburg. It was after his assassination and his body lay in state for a short time in the state Capitol. It was then I saw him for the second time. I saw the tired-lined face, the eyes closed as if in sleep and the bullet wound in his head. And I thought of that look of weary sadness that I had noticed on his face and of the glorifying smile that had followed it.”—From The Methodist February 6, 1919.