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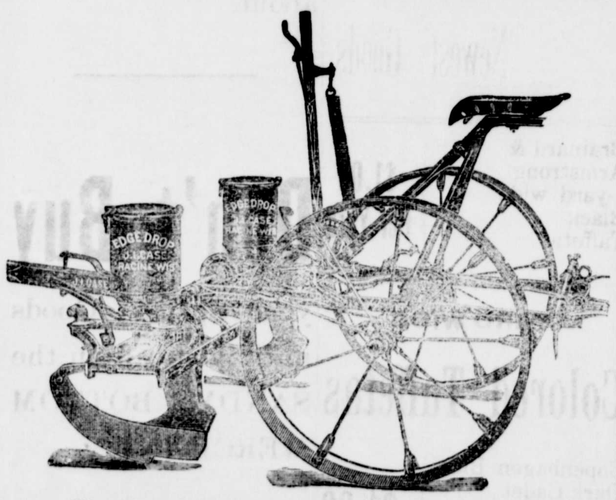
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R. L. DOWNING A CONVERT.

Actor Leaves Stage To Become a Preacher.

HE TALKS FROM THE PULPIT.

Announces His Conversion in a Dramatic Manner in Washington M. P. Church.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

Washington, March 15—Robert L. Downing, the well-known actor, has forsaken the stage for the church. He announced that he was converted last Tuesday evening at a revival service at the Rhode Island Avenue Methodist Protestant Church. Friday night he mounted the pulpit of that church and made his first address as a Christian.

Mr. Downing had been touring the Western States in recent months in a play from his own pen denominated, "A Voice from the Wilderness." It dealt with the life of John the Baptist and had a Biblical theme. About a month ago he returned to his home in Washington for a rest, and was preparing to give a presentation of his play at a local theatre. His conversion has changed his plans. He declares he will not again appear upon the stage. His contracts have been canceled and he will become an evangelist.

When Mr. Downing returned to Washington he took up his residence at 51 Rhode Island avenue, within a stone's throw of the church. He began attending the revival services, which have been in progress there for five weeks under the direction of Rev. John M. Gill, the pastor, and Rev. B. F. Campbell, an evangelist from New York.

Mr. Downing last Tuesday night went up to the altar rail and declared his intention of "giving himself over to God." The service was largely attended and the spirit of the evangelists had deeply swayed the congregation, which was singing "Almost Persuaded." Some one in the audience was heard to suddenly cry out in a lond voice, "I Will!" Rev. Dr. Gill and the evangelist saw Mr. Downing advancing toward the front of the church, with his arms lifted in the air in a gesture of supplication. When he reached the altar-rail he uttered a prayer before he knelt with the rest.

BIG CROWD HEARS ACTOR.

Mr. Downing has attended every evening of the revival since his conversion. He was persuaded to enter the pulpit last Friday night, when Rev. Mr. Campbell was called to New York for a lecture. Friday evening the greatest crowd the church has accommodated in its history assembled to hear Mr. Downing speak. There were probably 2,000 persons present, 600 standing throughout the entire service, which was conducted by Rev. John M. Gill, the pastor.

Mr. Downing said that he had met with success on the stage; that he had been chasing the bubble of worldly fame; that he had met with financial success, but that the moment of his conversion was the happiest in his entire career. He said he had been asked since his conversion what he intended to do. His reply was that he had nothing to do; his career had been changed, and he had forsaken the stage forever. He advised all who wished to be good Christians to abandon the theatre and the world and to work for Christ. He then announced his purpose of becoming a preacher of the Gospel.

Since then arrangements have been in progress for Mr. Downing to take up evangelestic work. The pastor of Ryland Methodist Episcopal Church, in Southeast Washington, and the pastor of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church have already called for his aid in revivals. Mr. Downing is being prepared for this evangelistic work by the pastor under whose auspices he was converted, Rev. Dr. Gill.

BEGAN STAGE CAREER IN BALTIMORE.

Mr. Downing has been connected with the stage for more than 30 [illegible]. Those Baltimoreans who knew [illegible] old company organized by the late John T. Ford will recall that Mr. Downing was a member of that dramatic company when it toured the South during the season of 1876-77, with Mary Anderson as the leading lady. Mr. Downing has been known as a Shakespearean and heroic Roman player, but he has en[illegible] many roles in his time. When he was the husband of Eugenia Blair he made a long tour with her. In that period he appeared as Orso, in "Helena," in 1895 as David Larcque, in the play of that name, in 1897, and as Putnam, in "Putnam," Nero, in "The Gladiator," and Hervoy, in "In Search of Happiness," all in 1896. He has been seen many times in Spartacus and Othello. In 1903 and 1904 he went on tour in "Hon. John North," a play dealing with politics.

Mr. Downing was born in Washington in 1857 and entered the theatrical profession at Baltimore in 1876. He has acted with such stars as Mary Anderson, Edwin Booth, John McCullough, John E. Owens and Joseph Jefferson. Since 1899 he has starred under his own management as Virginius, Spartacus, Othello, Ingomar and in other heroic roles. His residence for many years was Edgemore, near Bennings, D. C.

REV. J. M. GILL LIVED IN MARYLAND.

The pastor of the church where the conversion occurred, Rev. Dr. Gill, is a native of Virginia, but is well known in Maryland. Educated at Western Maryland College, Westminister, he completed his studies at John Hopkins University, and was stationed in Baltimore for six years as pastor of the Harford Avenue Methodist Protestant Church and three years as pastor of the Mount Royal Methodist Protestant Church. From there he went to Chestertown, Md., as pastor of the Methodist Protestant Church for five years.

Seven years ago he came to Washington as pastor of the little one-story, vine-covered Methodist Protestant Church at the southeast corner of Twelfth and M streets northwest. The old church was sold to the Seventh Day Adventists and the Methodist Protestant congregation, then consisting of only 42 members, bought a lot at the intersection of Florida avenue and North Capitol street with the proceeds. The church did not have money enough to build at once and pitched a tent in which services were held. That was five years ago. To-day the congregation has replaced the tent with a fine new church and has 700 members and 732 Sunday-school members.

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A WITTY JUDGE.

His Conclusions on the Evidence of Ditto and True.

The late Hon. Noah Davis, well known throughout the country as the judge who tried and sentenced Boss Tweed, was justly celebrated in many ways. He was of that type of jurist for which western New York was famed during the half century following 1850. Orleans county is proud of him as one of her noblest and most distinguished sons. He was slightly above medium height, full habited, large head, fine, clean cut face—indeed, a striking figure in any community. He was a well read lawyer, an honest, fair minded judge, with a keen sense of humor and withal something of a writer and poet. The following lines from his pen, written on the spur of the moment and in the midst of a trial, illustrate the alertness and quality of his mind. They are perhaps the best play upon words of which we have any record in the English language.

It was at the Niagara circuit in the early seventies. Judge Davis presided. An action in ejectment was called. The dispute was over a party wall or a division line. It was purely a question for the civil engineer. The division line established and the case was won. The defendant's attorney, realizing this, called as expert witnesses the Hon. John A. Ditto, city engineer of Buffalo, and the Hon. A. R. True, the engineer who constructed the cantalever bridge over Niagara river at the falls. They were two of the most eminent civil engineers in the state. They made a survey of the premises and established the division line as contended for by the defendant and when called to the witness stand so testified, giving monuments, courses and distances with such minute exactness that they could not be successfully controverted. The moment True, who followed Ditto as a witness, left the stand, Judge Davis wrote these lines and passed them to the clerk to hand to plaintiff's counsel:

Since True swears ditto to Ditto,
And Ditto swears ditto to True,
If True be true and Ditto be ditto,
I think they're too many for you.

—Daniel H. McMillan in Buffalo Truth.

Man and His Sweet Tooth.

"If you want to have that tradition upset about women only having a sweet tooth," remarked the stenographer who works downtown, "just go into a quick lunch room occasionally and watch the men who drink coffee or chocolate with their midday meals. I give you my word I have seen not one, but many men, put six lumps of sugar into their one cup of coffee or chocolate and then eat apple pie that is fairly covered with powdered sugar."—New York Press.

Makes a Difference.

A girl who used to make all sorts of fun of those who were poor spellers is now receiving three fat letters a week from a man who can't spell correctly more than forty words altogether. But he has a big, nice house and money in the bank—and that spells something to her. — Howard (Kan.) Courant.

Perhaps She Did.

"Did your daughter inherit her talent for drawing?"

"Well, I never thought of it before, but it may be that she did. One of my brothers is a dentist."—Chicago Record-Herald.



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Of course it will need our attention again in about a year—as it is always better to be too soon than too late.

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