

UNDER TWO FLAGS FOR THE CHURCH

BY REV. R. E. HARVEY

A romantically minded writer, if suitably versed in church terminology and procedure, in frontier dialects and practices, and gifted with some knowledge of tropical customs and conditions, might construct an interesting novel out of the career of Reverend Nicholas S. Bastion, premiere parish pastor and seminary teacher of Iowa. His versatile talents and restless disposition made impress upon two continents and in widely separated communities in two states.

Of him church historians—some of them contemporaries—have said, "he has been represented as a man of good scholarship, considerable business talents, fair preaching ability, and some eccentricity."¹ "Bastion, who is said to have been a good preacher and talented in some directions, was irritable and given to change," was the verdict of another.² "He was a very sensitive man," wrote a third.³ All of these characteristics peep from between the lines of his life's record.

Of Nicholas Bastion's parentage, birthplace, education or conversion, we have no information. His first recorded appearance on any scene was his reception on trial in the Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at Jacksonville, Illinois, September 25, 1832, from whence he was sent to the Lebanon Circuit as Junior Preacher.⁴ His second trial year was served in the same capacity on the Sangamon Circuit, where, if he chanced to contact the angular young surveyer known to all and sundry as "Honest Abe," no mention was ever made of the event.

¹Aaron W. Haines, *Makers of Methodism*, p. 32.

²E. H. Waring, *History of Iowa Annual Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church*, p. 89.

³*Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher*, ed. by W. P. Strickland, p. 390.

⁴Junior Preacher according to the Methodist usage at the time referred to, the young preachers were assigned as assistants to older and more experienced ministers who directed their studies and instructed them in pastoral techniques.

Having concluded his apprenticeship with due credit, Bastion was received into full conference membership, ordained Deacon, and appointed "Missionary to Dubuque Mission, Dubuque Lead Mines, Upper Mississippi River, Michigan Territory," at the conference held at Mt. Carmel, Illinois, October 1, 1834.⁵ The field so named had been preempted for the Methodist Church the preceeding year as part of the "Galena and Dubuque Mission" by Reverend Barton Randle, who had gathered a Class of twelve members, and who, with their help and the assistance of "friendly sinners" had erected a small log chapel, Iowa's first house of worship.⁶ With this promising beginning, Dubuque and the surrounding settlements were set off into a separate mission circuit, the first exclusively Iowa parish of any denomination; all church activities in the recently acquired Black Hawk Purchase up to that time had been merely extensions of older fields in the adjoining states.

Nicholas Bastion arrived in Dubuque, October 20, 1834, and preached his first sermon there Sunday, November 2,⁷ meanwhile, laying out an extensive four weeks circuit with preaching places chiefly at private homes, for lack of public facilities. Among the residences used for these preaching "points" were those of J. T. Newlin, H. T. Camp, Simeon Yount, Jesse Yount, —Bolles, and Center Grove, place names probably meaningless to present day residents, although the point last named was for many years the head of a thriving Methodist circuit.⁸

In the years Bastion remained there, Dubuque itself was but a log cabin and board shack village of a scant few hundred population, with men outnumbering women five to one. Lacking anything but home made protection for life and property—due to tardy Congressional action in extending legal recognition to the pioneers west of the Mississippi—the natural consequence was that all the worst elements of the mining regions on both sides of the river

⁵For all Nicholas Bastion's ministerial appointments in the Methodist church, see 'General Conference Minutes' for the appropriate years.

⁶Waring, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18; see also *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd Series, XXI:245-50; *History of Dubuque County, Iowa*, (Western Historical Company, 1880), pp. 353, 356.

⁷*History of Dubuque County, op. cit.*, p. 359.

⁸Waring, pp. 40-41. For Center Point see *Minutes of the Upper Iowa Conference, M. E. Church*.

gravitated thither, making of the groceries and saloons rendezvous for hideous debauchery, featured by frequent, fierce and sometimes deadly, brawls, emanating from drink or disputed mining claims.

Yet though outside the bounds of established institutions, conditions were not nearly as desperate as modern fancy might depict, for "the lawless were held in check by men who counted to secure good order and morals, and who were immensely helped by the frontier ministers and religious congregations."⁹ A statement confirmed by Bastion himself. He is quoted as saying that ministers were generally treated with respect, and that "even the roughest and most profane attended the meetings with interest, and would often come ten miles on foot to attend the preaching."¹⁰

Sometime during the year 1834-1835, Reverend Bastion, assisted by Mrs. Lockwood, Messrs. Woodbury Massie, John Johnson and others, resurrected the Sunday School, launched the preceding summer by his predecessor, Reverend Randle. As a further contribution to community uplift, and incidentally to eke out his missionary stipend of \$125, Bastion opened a school in the Methodist Church, a use contemplated when it was first built. This was not an infrequent practice of the pioneer clergy, who so far from being illiterate clowns, imbued with nothing but a fanatical mania for hysterical conversions, as some modern fiction writers delight to portray them, were, as a class, men of culture, comparing favorably with that of the doctors and lawyers of the day. Even the less well educated among them were equal or superior to the common run of frontier "schoolmasters," whose accomplishments too often scarcely comprised a full mastery of the three R's.

Bastion's school has been called Iowa's first academy,¹¹ but probably included whatever his pupils desired, from ABC's to Latin and "higher arithmetic," taught from whatever textbooks the student brought from wherever they formerly lived. This variety, ample enough to satisfy the

⁹F. T. Oldt, *History of Dubuque*, pp. 48-49.

¹¹C. Ray Aurner, *History of Education in Iowa*, III: 15-16.

¹⁰Waring, p. 41.

teacher's love of novelty, likewise aroused the cupidity of one of the many vagabonds drifting around the mines, who broke into the church and carried away school books, hymnals, and whatever else was worth stealing.

Discovering the theft next morning, Reverend Bastion, with a quick surmise, toured the numerous thirst parlors of the settlement, soon found where the plunder had been pawned for whiskey. A citizen's posse quickly laid hands on the thief, and resolving itself into an impromptu court of justice, in One, Two, Three order adjudged him guilty, imposed on him the threefold penalty of restoring the stolen property, being drummed out of town to the tune of *The Rogue's March*, and banishment for life under penalty of a hundred lashes on the bare back in case of return. Item one of the sentence disposed of, item two was inflicted with every noise producing appliance at hand, the older school boys participating with a vim that must have spelled severe chastisement of mother's dishpan and boiler lid. Item three remained indefinitely suspended, the culprit carefully omitting Dubuque from his subsequent travels.¹²

This was by no means the earliest or most thrilling adventure of the year. Mr. Bastion's first, or at latest, second Sunday evening service in the log church was disrupted by the inrush of a quartette of town boys crying out "Someone is stealing Tate's girl!" Thereupon preacher and hearers dashed out to rescue the subject of Iowa's first kidnapping, a fifteen year old stepdaughter of Mr. Tate. The girl's \$1500 inheritance from her deceased father aroused the cupidity of her visiting grandmother, who enroute to Dubuque conspired with the captain of the steamboat which had brought her there. The plan, apparently, was to capture the girl, and other means failing, to hold her prisoner on the boat until a large part or all of her inheritance should be paid ransom.

Pursuant to the plot, when the steamboat tied up at the Dubuque pier on its return trip from St. Paul, the Captain sent a number of his deck hands in search of the girl. At "early candle lighting," when most of the town was attend-

¹²Waring, *ibid.*

ing church services, the men entered the Tate residence, bound Mr. Tate, siezed the girl, and hurried her off to the boat by a deep gully known locally as "Lorimer's Hollow." A group of neighborhood boys who had watched every motion of the seamen then raced to the church with the alarm.

The whole town swarmed to the waterside, where the captain with profane emphasis denied all knowledge of the affair, and in proof, permitted James Fanning to inspect the passenger cabins, where of course he found no one. But just as the crew were preparing to push off down stream, a certain silversmith, Kadmus by name, convinced by the frantic assertions of the boys, ran up with a basket of fire-balls, composed of tarsoaked tow from a nearby cooper-shop, and threatened to make a grand bonfire of ship and cargo unless the missing girl was released forthwith. To such argument there was no possible negative; the victim was immediately released, and the boat permitted to depart, bearing along the scheming grandparent, who prudently kept herself out of sight during the commotion.¹³

Before the church year was out, stark tragedy actually did befall the little congregation Reverend Bastion served. Woodbury Massie, eldest of several brothers, a leading member of the flock, trustee and principal contributor to the building fund of the Methodist log chapel, a man prominent in both business and social life, had, by his vigorous support of crime suppression measures, incurred the enmity of all the baser elements in the community. Among the latter were two Smiths, father and son, who had laid claim to the "Irish Lot," an abandoned mine that Massie had purchased, and on which he had uncovered a valuable ore deposit.

Carrying the disputed claim into the newly established Michigan territorial courts, Massie obtained a decision in his favor. On September 7, 1835, as the sheriff was in the act of putting him in possession, the Smiths shot Massie through the heart, from an ambush close by, in plain view

¹³"Tate's girl" lived on in unmolested peace, until in due time and of her own accord she transferred herself and her fortune to a home provided by some admiring swain. The kidnapping episode is collated from several varying accounts. See *History of Dubuque County, Iowa*, op. cit., p. 371.

of his horrified wife and children. The assassins were arrested and arraigned before the circuit court, sitting at Mineral Point, [Wisconsin] where their attorney secured dismissal of the complaints on the ground that Michigan law had not extended the criminal jurisdiction of its courts to include Dubuque County.

Fearing to return to the scene of their crime, the Smiths went to Galena, where a brother of Woodbury Massie, meeting the elder of the two men on the street, killed him on the spot, a deed so completely approved by public opinion that the young man was not even arrested for the act. Shortly afterwards the younger man very nearly met his death too, when, breathing fire and vengeance on the Massie tribe he returned to Dubuque and overawed the local magistrate. Louisa Massie, only sister of the threatened family, arming herself with a horse pistol concealed under a long cloak, and accompanied by a boy named Williams, found young Smith in Guerin's store. Walking up to him, and crying, "If you are Bill Smith defend yourself," she fired at him point blank as he tried to draw a weapon. Saved from death by a fortunately placed packet of papers, thus stunned but not killed, Smith soon set out in furious pursuit of the fleeing girl, who sought shelter in each of several homes, and found eventual safety from the search of her pursuer.

In Dubuque her action was the match that blew things wide open, for popular indignation, seething over the fiasco in dealing with Woodbury Massie's slayers, blazed forth in a massmeeting that served thirty-six hours notice on the whole rabble of undesirables, both male and female, to move or else—. Stages and ferries were packed with the fugitives, and a distinctly better moral atmosphere pervaded the Spanish Mines from thenceforward.¹⁴

It does not appear that Mr. Bastion figured in this feud other than as the pastor of the Massie family naturally would, nor is there any indication that the tragedy affected his subsequent course. But at the session of the Illinois

¹⁴Details of the Massie—sometimes given Massey—murder differ in various accounts, but in essential facts agree. See *History of Dubuque County*, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-70. Tradition says Louisa County was named in honor of Louisa Massie, but more generally accepted is the claim that the county was named for another of the same name in Virginia.

Conference, at Springfield, October 1, 1835, he "located," and remained in Dubuque, teaching school.¹⁵ His church had prospered despite all the harrassments above noted; the dozen in the Class had increased to forty, and the Sunday School had purchased a library. His interest in the church continued, however, and at the first quarterly meeting of the new conference year, in November, 1835, he was elected trustee in Woodbury Massie's place, and also Recording Steward (secretary). In addition to this he assisted in shaping and operating an efficient financial plan for the support of his successor in the pastorate, Reverent Henry W. Reed.¹⁶

Seeking a larger field than Dubuque offered, where the opening of the Catholic parochial school the preceding June¹⁷ without question must have depleted his school attendance, Bastion moved to Catfish Gap, ten miles west of Dubuque, where a large colony of English miners of a superior type both mentally and religiously supplied patronage sufficient to warrant the opening of a boarding school, Iowa's first experiment in non-resident education. The school attracted pupils in such numbers that it excited great curiosity among passing Indians, one of whose principal trails into the settlements ran close to the school grounds.

Probably to stave off inquisitive annoyance from this source, the teacher invited the leading Sioux chief on a visit, and conducted him through the establishment, carefully explaining every procedure. The noble Red Man took it all with supreme dignity and courtesy, albeit with little comprehension of what it was all about. Most of all, the chief was puzzled on learning that none of the many youngsters were Bastion's own offspring. Although utterly at a loss to understand such interest in other people's children, he nevertheless bestowed upon his host the Indian cognomen meaning "Big Father," by which name he was known to the tribesmen during his stay on the frontier.¹⁸ Besides

¹⁵"Located" meant that a preacher had discontinued his "Conference" relationship without withdrawing from the ministry. To do this he must be in good standing at the time of location. He would then be entitled to subsequent re-admission to regular conference membership. See Waring, p. 41.

¹⁶Waring, p. 45, based upon "the old record in the plain hand of Bastion."

¹⁷*Annals of Iowa*, 3rd Series, XXI:256.

his school work, the teacher also labored as a local preacher, few Sundays finding him unemployed, as he ranged far and wide wherever a handful of settlers could be assembled for worship. Thus Bastion possessed the honor of being the first preacher and teacher in Northeast Iowa outside the town of Dubuque.¹⁸

During the two years Bastion's boarding school seems to have operated, his conference status appears slightly confused. The General Conference Minutes for 1835 does not contain his name in any capacity, although as noted above, he "located" at that session. On the official records of the Dubuque Circuit his name was entered as "Local Deacon,"—an ordained clergyman not a member of Annual Conference. Yet in the General Conference Minutes of 1836, Reverend Bastion is listed as a "superannuate," with a grant of \$55 from funds provided for disabled members of Conference, and the next year he was continued in this relation, with an allowance of \$84. Moreover, that conference elected and ordained him Elder, a promotion usually only granted after four years of continuous pastoral labor from the date of admission on trial. Finally, the 1837 Conference assigned him to a charge without any notation of his relationship being changed from that of superannuation.

Whether he abandoned pedagogy because of certain other schools opened in or near Dubuque about this time, as local annals mention, or whether it was a step indicative of his restless disposition, we do not know. Possibly the mineral deposits at Catfish Gap were exhausted, breaking up the camp and leaving him without clientele, or it may have been the inner urge of the higher calling which reasserted itself. Whatever the cause, he went back into the active ministry, being appointed to Burlington where he assumed his duties in October, 1837. There an emergency called for a pastor of a versatile genius.¹⁹

The Methodist Church in Burlington, organized in 1834 about the same time as that at Dubuque, had remained during the intervening years without a permanent place of worship. At the annual conference session held at Jackson-

¹⁸Waring, p. 41.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

ville in 1835, Dr. Ross' representations of the opportunity offered by the rapidly growing city caused the Burlington Class to be detached from the sixteen point circuit and given a pastor of its own. Plans for a church building had been under way for some time, however, due to the energetic and faithful efforts of Dr. William R. Ross, pioneer physician and merchant, who donated two good lots, and excavated a "cellar" on the grounds largely at his own expense. When the temporary wooden structure which served the Territory of Wisconsin as a legislative hall in its temporary capital at Burlington burned down late in December, 1837, Dr. Ross and associates renewed their building enterprise, with the purpose of renting the completed church to the next legislature as an assembly chamber.

With characteristic enthusiasm for any new job, Reverend Nicholas Bastion threw himself into the enterprise upon his arrival and redoubled his efforts in the spring, spurred by the fire of the December before. But the scales were heavily weighted against success. The panic of 1837 brought on the worst depression the young nation had then experienced. There were but forty-five members in the church, and outside assistance was almost nil for the project. Not until March 5, 1838, was there "a meeting at Mr. Chapman's room, to take into consideration means to the erection of a meeting house." There were present besides Bastion, Messrs. J. C. Sleeth, Thomas Ballard, — Hargue, William Denison, and William R. Ross. They resolved, however, to build a house of brick, 40 x 60 feet. Ross, Sleeth, and Hargue were chosen as the building committee, with most exact instructions and authority as to estimating probable expense, raising funds, planning said building, letting and making all contracts, and supervising the work; with power to form their own regulations and to fill vacancies in their number. In return they were to receive a lien on the building as security.

March 19, 1838, the Quarterly Conference approved the foregoing action, and added Adam Fordney to the committee. The probable cost was fixed at between \$2000 and \$3000. On April 2 "the contracts for the stone, lime, lum-

ber, brick, timber and digging" were all let. On June 25, however, the building committee was disbanded, and the trustees of the church assumed all obligations.²⁰ This step was probably due to the act of the Wisconsin territorial legislature in its last session at Burlington, granting articles of incorporation to the Burlington Methodist Episcopal Church, said to be the first such enacted for any religious body in Iowa.²¹

Nevertheless, collections came in slowly, and bills accumulated. The pastor was sent on "a begging tour of the East," a very common and sometimes quite profitable recourse of hard pushed western churches. A purse of \$30 was made up to start him off, with full expectation that the mission would be self-supporting and much more. But hard times were universal; good wishes were about the only response to his fervent appeals, and at Louisville, Kentucky, he found himself stranded, though by rare good fortune he was able to borrow \$25 to get home.²²

In the meantime, his own finances were far from satisfactory. Of his salary promised, \$476.12, he received in nine months \$265, of which \$72 went for house rent, leaving \$193 for living expenses. There was but poor prospect of any more from the debt ridden congregation, whose house of worship was ultimately saved for them by Dr. Ross at the sacrifice of his own residence, the best then standing in Burlington. With these facts in mind, Nicholas Bastion resigned from the pastorate at the Third Quarterly Meeting of the Burlington church. For the remainder of the conference year, Burlington was supplied with preaching from Mt. Pleasant. While Bastion's Burlington work looks like failure at this distance, yet E. H. Waring, who many years subsequently was pastor of the same church, believed that he rendered yeoman service in promoting the building of the church, and that if there was any failure, "it was due to the incorrigibility of the surrounding circumstances."²³

²⁰*History of Des Moines County Iowa*, (Western Historical Company, 1879); pp. 547-49.

²¹J. F. Boeye, *Centennial Sketch of First Methodist Episcopal Church of Burlington*, in which the references to N. S. Bastion seem to have been culled from an address at the Semi-Centennial of the same church, delivered by Rev. William Salter of the Burlington Congregational Church, given almost in full in the *Semi-Centennial History of "Old Zion"* by Rev. T. S. Stocking, 1884.

²²*History of Des Moines County*, *op. cit.*

²³Waring, pp. 88-89.

Perhaps the teacher's chair renewed its appeal to his changeable mind. At any rate, the Annual Conference held at Alton, Illinois, September 12, 1838, elected him principal of the Preparatory Department of McKendree College, a position of vastly more relative importance than it would be today. For in the total absence of high school facilities, the preparatory attendance at any college often outnumbered and over-shadowed the regular student body. Most colleges then, and for a lifetime thereafter, were obliged to maintain grammar (grade school) classes to supplement the defective "destrict school" curriculum of the period.

At the end of another year Nicholas Bastion was back in the pastorate, permanently, being appointed to Vandalia, a place of considerable consequence, having been until a short time previously, the capital of Illinois. Serving there two years—the Methodist limit of the day—he next gave a year to Hillsboro station, and then went to the Alton station, where transpired the episode so graphically related in the autobiography of Bastion's Presiding Elder, the famed and pugnacious Peter Cartwright.²⁴ Cartwright's account, it may be added, reveals a sensibility hardly looked for in the tough old swashbuckler, and also manifests a common sense valuation of a repentant sinner far above that entertained by his more scholarly fellow worker.

Among the crowds that thronged to the quarterly meetings held at Alton in the dead of that winter, 1842-43, were two good-looking, well dressed young ladies, so deeply affected, "it seemed as if the great depths of their hearts was broken up." Although informed by the local ladies of the church that the two were of questionable virtue, Cartwright firmly refused their requests that they be dismissed from the church meetings. But Bastion was uneasy as to the effect of their presence, and urged Cartwright that they be sent away. While the Presiding Elder's attention was directed to one portion of the meeting, Bastion requested the two women to leave. Cartwright, however, immediately went to them and, encouraging the two in their resolution to abandon their past and to unite with the church, promptly

²⁴Cartwright, *Autobiography*, pp. 388-92.

offered prayer in which, upon the insistence of that canny evangelist, he was joined by the virtuous and sensitive sisters of the church. One of the women stayed, the "other left the house weeping; she never returned to our meeting. Perhaps she was forever lost on account of this uncalled for rebuke." The other woman did join the church where, as the fiery presiding elder recorded, "in other and after years, and with firm and unfaltering steps [she] lived up to her profession and thoroughly redeemed herself from degradation, in the estimation of all who knew her."

The revival of which the above was an incident, increased the Alton church membership from 240 to 303, and Reverend Bastion remained there as pastor for the second year. Then in 1844 he was appointed Presiding Elder of the Danville District, a group of a dozen or more pastoral charges, each of which he was expected to visit four times during the year, preaching at the Quarterly Meetings, presiding in the Quarterly Conference—business session—besides directing and assisting in the evangelistic and church building activities of the ministers and their people. As the most important functions, he acted as permanent committee on pulpit supply, and advised the Bishop assigned to the Conference presidency.

No resume of his work on the district is possible since access to the records is lacking. But the fact that he was re-appointed to this post annually for the full disciplinary term of four years is evidence that he discharged his duties acceptably. Further indication of his powers was his appointment in 1848 as pastor at Jacksonville, seat of McKendree College, one of the most prominent churches in the Illinois Conference.

Additional proof of Bastion's executive and ministerial fitness is the fact that during the ensuing year he was advanced to the very highest appointive position in the church, ranking next to the Episcopacy itself, assignment to the Superintendance of the Liberia Mission, Methodism's oldest, and then most important, over-seas outpost, and its only field in all the continent of Africa. To this post he sailed on August 1, 1849.²⁵

²⁵James T. Reid, *History of Missions Methodist Episcopal Church*, I:232.

Liberia, as few of this century remember, was the first trans-oceanic colony planted by the United States. Founded in 1820 as a haven for the Free Negro, the project was cordially supported by many of our leading statesmen in the vain hope of encouraging emancipation by providing in this way for the freed slaves. It was thought thereby to solve the most perilous political problem of the day, and at the same time introduce the elements of civilization into the Dark Continent. The colony was recognized as an independent Republic in 1847, but it failed very largely to realize either objective. The few thousand American Negroes able and willing to undertake the venture, found themselves scattered along five hundred miles of pestilential coast lands, with a back country swarming with pagan savages who regarded them with the same jealous hostility the Indians entertained for the Pilgrim Fathers. Nor have conditions bettered themselves greatly during the intervening century.

Here in 1833 American Methodism opened its first foreign missionary enterprise, under the leadership of Melville Cox, who dying after only a few months, transmitted a farewell message that survives as an inspiring slogan, "Let a thousand fall before Africa be given up!"²⁶ Landing in Monrovia, September 19, 1849, Bastion found himself in surroundings hardly more inviting than the Spanish Lead Mines at their crudest. The widely dispersed mission stations were manned by colored ministers, most of whom possessed just such scholarship as might be looked for in such primitive conditions. Even those who attained to a better degree of education, with spiritual qualifications to match, most needs wait years for ordination, pending the more than rare visitations of American Bishops, or their ability to make the long voyage to the United States and back again.

Detailed accounts of Nicholas Bastion's brief administration of this field are lacking. However, on January 5, 1850,

²⁶See "Rev. Francis Burns," in *Ladies Repository*, March, 1859. Rev. Burns was a talented Negro missionary in Liberia, who became Bastion's successor as Superintendent of that field, and subsequently was elected Missionary Bishop for Africa, the first dignitary of that rank in Methodist history.

he presided at the Liberia Conference, as was his duty in the absence of a Bishop. Then on February 9 of that year came dismissal and a recall, for "extravagance and liberty of administration assumed by himself."²⁷ One can only infer that with considerable missionary funds at his disposal, Bastion may have yielded to the temptation of launching larger programs than the facts or conditions warranted, though the distance from, and difficulty of communication with, denominational headquarters may easily have led him to overstep the limits of his sub-episcopal authority in meeting what looked like pressing necessities in the work.

Whatever the grounds for his demotion, the action of dismissal terminated his relationship with the Methodist Church. Instead of returning home immediately, as might have been expected, he stayed on in Liberia another year, during which time he buried his wife and child.²⁸ How he was employed we are not informed, but it may have been in another American mission operating in that country. If that is a correct surmise it would help to explain the fact that on his return to Illinois in 1851, Bastion, professing a change in credal views, entered the ministry of the Baptist denomination.

Soon afterwards he was once again in Dubuque, upon the scenes of his earlier adventures, when he succeeded Reverend Gorham as pastor of the Baptist congregation. That body almost immediately sold its church structure, and moved into the county court house while launching a vigorous new building enterprise. This involved them in such embarrassment that the society was eventually disbanded.²⁹ Then from November 22, 1856 to May 1, 1858, he was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Davenport, where he encountered a situation very similar to that at Dubuque, but which had a better result.

Some time previously, the Davenport Baptists, hoping to

²⁷Reid, *op. cit.*

²⁸This is the only reference to Bastion's family the writer has been able to discover. Where he was married, and to whom, were overlooked by historians not often guilty of such negligence.

²⁹Cf. *Dubuque of Today. The Key City, Historical Description and Biography* 1897, pp. 73-74.

promote denominational growth, had divided the parent body, the second congregation locating in a different part of town, while the First Church, perhaps on account of business expansion, sold their property at Fourth and Brady streets, a lot which had been donated by Antoine LeClaire, founder of Davenport, and purchased a larger tract at Sixth and Main streets. In the midst of building a pretentious structure when the financial crash of 1857 came, the Davenport congregation was in precisely the same situation as that which had befallen Old Zion at Burlington twenty years earlier, with apparently no Davenport twin to Dr. Ross willing to sacrifice everything for his church. When the new building was surrendered to the creditors, the First Church attached itself to its own offshoot, with the laudable result that one Baptist property in the city was saved for the denomination.³⁰

Nicholas Bastion was saved from sharing in this strategic retreat by the action of the Baptist State Conference, which in April, 1858, elected him to act as Financial Agent, to raise funds for their state missionary undertakings, whose regular revenues had been wiped out by the business depression. This task, quite congenial to his talents, Bastion discharged so efficiently that in the five and a half months he was so engaged, reported collections of \$2325.32, at a total cost in salary and expenses of \$413.66. A result accomplished "in spite of the great financial crisis, which well nigh palsied our benevolences, but greatly helped by the great revival, which doubtless did much to stay the tide of reaction."³¹

The last glimpse we have of this energetic Soldier of the Cross is at work upon this task. On Sunday, August 22, 1858, at the Des Moines Baptist Association in Richmond, Iowa, "Bro. Bastion preached - - - Romans 13, after which a collection was taken for the State Convention amounting to \$21.60."³²

³⁰G. P. Mitchell, *Century of Iowa Baptist History*, (Pella, Iowa, 1934), I:217. See also Harry E. Downer, *History of Davenport and Scott County*, I:612; Franc Willkie, *Davenport Past and Present*, p. 288.

³¹S. H. Mitchell, *Historical Sketches of Iowa Baptists*, pp. 57-58.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 110.

And so vanishes from the stage, as abruptly as he entered it twenty-six years previously, this pioneer pastor, teacher, builder, and clergyman.

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