

**BRIGHAM'S DESTROYING ANGEL:
BEING THE LIFE, CONFESSION,
AND STARTLING DISCLOSURES OF
THE NOTORIOUS BILL HICKMAN,
THE DANITE CHIEF OF UTAH**

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WILLIAM ADAMS HICKMAN & J. H. BEADLE

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WILLIAM A. HICKMAN.

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LIFE, CONFESSION, AND STARTLING
DISCLOSURES

OF THE NOTORIOUS

BILL HICKMAN,
THE DANITE CHIEF OF UTAH.

Written by Himself, with Explanatory Notes by

J. H. BEADLE, ESQ.,
OF SALT LAKE CITY.

ILLUSTRATED.

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P R E F A C E.

It was in the Winter of 1868-9, that the editor first saw the subject of this work upon the street in Salt Lake. He was then spoken of generally in Utah as one of the notabilities of an epoch long past. I never heard him mentioned as having any connection with church or civil matters of recent occurrence. For years I had heard of "Bill Hickman, Chief of the Destroying Angels, Head Danite," &c., *ad nauseam*; but like most persons unacquainted with Mormon history, I regarded such matters as the creations of a fertile fancy. When convinced by a longer residence in Utah that there was and had long been *some* kind of a secret organization dangerous to Gentile and recusant Mormons, I began to examine the history of the Church more carefully; and while all the Mormon people spoke of Bill Hickman as a desperately bad man, and guilty of untold murders, I was struck by two curious and then unexplainable facts:—

1. The first was, that while everybody, from Brigham Young down, united in calling Hickman a murderer, and while evidence could easily be collected of several of his crimes, *not a single attempt had been made by priest or people to bring him to justice.* For twenty years the Mormons had the courts and juries exclusively in their own hands. During that time many persons had been executed for crime; they could do as they pleased in judicial matters, and abundant evidence was before them against Hickman; but no grand jury ever moved, there was no indictment, and not even a complaint before an examining magistrate. This indicated *something*—but what? Until I obtained Hickman's manuscript, I never fully knew. When Hickman was arrested all the Mormon speakers and papers united in denouncing him as "a notorious criminal, who had long been able to evade justice." If this was known, as they admit it was, why was not Hickman arrested and punished during that long period in which the Mormons arrested and punished whomsoever

they pleased? Ah, why, indeed—except upon the explanation given in this book.

2. The second point is, that long after Hickman was known as a murderer he was successively promoted to a number of offices; he was Sheriff and Representative of one county, Assessor and Collector of Taxes, and Marshal; and during all this time *he was on terms of personal intimacy with Brigham Young*. He was "in fellowship" in the Church until 1864, and Porter Rockwell, his compeer in crime, is a member of the Mormon Church in "full fellowship" to-day, and now the companion of Brigham Young in his travels! Can these things be explained on any theory, except that the statements in this book are true?

During all the changes of 1869 and '70 I rarely heard of Hickman. At length, in the autumn of 1870, while at Stockton, Utah, I heard the account of his polygamous wife, which is detailed in his confession. A few days after I left there I was horrified to hear of the murder of her Gentile husband—a Spaniard—and the evidence left no doubt in my mind that it was perpetrated by Hickman, assisted probably by one Bates, son of a Mormon bishop. It was reported that he had fled to the Southern part of Utah, and generally believed that he had taken refuge at Kanab, the new Mormon stronghold in the mountains bounding the Great Basin on the south, supposed also to be the hiding place of Burton (murderer of the Morrisites), Porter Rockwell, and other Danites, who, like Brigham Young, have "gone South for their health." But negotiations were in progress for his surrender, as detailed in his statement, and in August, 1871, he was brought to Camp Douglas. He is not confined, as, for obvious reasons, he would not dare return to any of the Mormon settlements, but has the freedom of the camp, with quarters and rations at the guard-room. From this place he sent me an invitation to visit him, and there I first met him face to face. I saw a man of heavy build, round head, and somewhat awkward, shuffling gait; five feet nine inches in height, with bright, but cold blue eyes, of extreme mobility, hair and beard dark auburn—the latter now tinged with gray—and a square, solid chin. His vitality is evidently great, and his muscles well developed. Our conversation need not be recorded, except to say that the man impressed me with his earnestness, and left me with a much better opinion of him than I had before. I then agreed to take charge of his manuscript, and, to use his own language, "Fix it up in shape, so people would understand it."

My first intention was to re-write it entirely, speaking of Hickman in the third person; but one perusal satisfied me that it would be far better as he had written it. I have thought it best, also, to preserve his own phraseology nearly exactly, only inserting a word occasionally where absolutely necessary to prevent mistake. With very few exceptions, the narrative is precisely as written by Hickman, and, some faults of grammar and slang terms aside, I think every critic must admit that our sentimental and religious murderer has a singularly pleasing style. Neither have I thought it best to interrupt his narrative with explanations, but in the more important cases have added the corroborative evidence in an appendix. Late developments in Utah have poured a flood of light on many dark and bloody mysteries, and it is a great mistake to suppose that the recent criminal proceedings against Brigham Young and other leaders were founded upon the testimony of Hickman alone. He only supplied the clew which led to other evidence.

Notwithstanding the publications on the subject, many are still unacquainted with Mormon history. Hence I have given a brief outline thereof in the first chapter, which is submitted to the criticism of the reader.

J. H. BEADLE.

Salt Lake City, Dec. 10, 1870.



BRIGHAM YOUNG.