

THE ASSASSINATION.

Col. M. B. Darnell, of Sheldon, Iowa, is in the city. He has been in California for five months, and came to Salt Lake on the same train with W. H. Culmer, Esq., of this city, who has been on a visit to California. Col. Darnell is an interesting figure to the people of Utah, from the fact that he is probably the only living eye witness of the assassination of the Prophet Joseph Smith, at Carthage, Illinois, on the 27th of June, 1844.

Col. Darnell was met by a News representative Wednesday, March 7, and in response to inquiries made a statement of what he personally knew regarding that awful deed. He said:

"You know it is a long time since then. It is fifty years ago, and my memory may be faulty in some particulars, but I will relate that only which I remember distinctly. When the Mormons came to Commerce, they changed the name to Nauvoo, and built the place up rapidly until there were about 15,000 people in the city. The inhabitants of that part of the state were of the roughest element to a great extent. The county offices were profitable positions, because there was big opportunity for stealing, so there was considerable rivalry between Whigs and Democrats as to who should get in.

"The Mormons were not in it as a political party, but they held the balance of power, and of course they voted for those they considered the best men. This caused great hostility toward the Mormons on part of the antis. They wanted to get rid of the Mormons, for political reasons, so they fed the feeling against them. There was lots of stealing going on, and it was charged to the Mormons. The women and children were taught to believe the Mormons guilty, but I do not. I know that stealing was done by others, and that the Mormons as a community were not chargeable with it. Of course there may have been some Mormons who stole, but it was mostly the rough element, and the fire-eating anti-Mormons accused the Mormons so as to get them driven out. The 'law and order' men, as we called them, wanted the courts to settle all matters, and were called Jack Mormons by the antis.

"I was a student under General M. R. Deming. He got me a commission as lieutenant, from Gov. Ford. He commanded the mob that arrested the Smiths at Nauvoo, but he was there as a friend of order. I call the *posse comitatus* that made the arrest a mob, because that was what it really was. They went through the process of law merely for form's sake. It was called a war at that time. When the posse was called by the sheriff, John Carlin, I was in the crowd and considered myself summoned, as it were, to assist in making that arrest.

"My recollection is we were there in Carthage a week. We went just outside the town and pitched our tents. We camped there and played soldiers as well as we knew how.

"Some way or other, I do not know how, communication was had by which the Smiths agreed to give themselves up, and the officers went out and met them about half way in the prairie and brought them in. They took them to the Hamilton house, a hotel, and

held them there for a couple of days, probably determining in their own mind what they were going to do.

"As an officer on Gen. Deming's staff it was my duty to take this company called the Carthage Greys, down to the hotel and form a hollow square, and they had a man with them by the name, I think, of Scribbling. He was attorney or counselor for the prisoners, I understood. They put the prisoners in the center of the square and marched them down to the general headquarters where they had their conference.

"The posse had the Smiths in their power and seemed disposed to make terms of some kind to determine what course would be pursued. At the end of about a couple of days they were placed in jail, which was a two story stone structure and overhead were very nice rooms, in one of which there was a bed. They were called 'the debtors' rooms.

"Very soon after the prisoners were placed in jail, it might have been the same day, the troops as we called them were all called together and Governor Ford addressed them. In his speech he stated that the object of their assembling had been accomplished; that the writ had been executed and the parties were in jail. He commanded the troops to disband and go to their several places of abode, and most of them did so.

"On the afternoon of the day of the assassination, the mob who did the killing came up. They had their faces painted a sort of brown color. I saw this crowd of men coming up from the direction of the creek at the northwest corner of the pasture. I was standing within ten or twenty steps of the pasture gate east of the jail. The crowd was coming single file, and stooping down. They had on blue hunting shirts. I knew something terrible was going to happen. I was a youth at the time and became transfixed to the spot. As the crowd turned the southwest corner of the jail, about one-half of them went right up the stairway, the other half came right against me. I got out of their way, and a moment afterwards I heard the report of a gun in the house. That was supposed to be the shot which killed Hyrum Smith. Joseph started to jump through the window, and the mob fired at him. He came out on the east side of the building. There was a large well just underneath there and he fell just outside the curb. Joseph was killed while passing out of the window.

"The Carthage Greys, it is said—and I have no doubt with truth, for I look at this thing very different now from what I did then, because I know more about men, their motives and dispositions—I say there is no doubt that the Carthage Greys were cognizant of the fact that that mob was coming. I believe every man of them knew it, and I also believe that their guns were charged with blank cartridges. When they fired a few shots at the mob, no one was hurt. The faces of the mob were painted a kind of Indian color.

"The Carthage Greys were a very nicely drilled company. It would seem to me that the mob were not any larger in number than the Carthage Greys. From my recollection I think the number was very nearly equal—about thirty or forty men in each. I

do not believe that the estimate of one hundred men in the mob is at all correct. Probably there were fifty to eighty in the mob; I thought there were less. It was understood there at the time that Thomas C. Sharp was the ringleader—the moving spirit in that mob. He commenced life as an attorney, but did not succeed, and became a newspaper editor. When I last saw him, several years ago, he was quite aged. I know there was such a man as William M. Daniels, but do not know what became of him. I knew Frank Worrell, commander of the guard at the jail. He was afterwards killed outside of Nauvoo, during the Mormon war in 1846. I also knew Alexander Sympton and his sons. They were at the jail. They were fiery anti-Mormons.

"I remember to have seen Joseph Smith jump from the window. It was a terribly exciting time and it all happened in an instant. I cannot describe it in any better way than by saying he came out just as though some one big and powerful had thrown him right through the window. Undoubtedly, however, he came by his own effort. He certainly did not hang to the window. It seems to me he came out head first, and he was shot while passing through the window. I do not know that I really saw any one set him up against the well. I know I partially saw it and got it from what they said at the time.

"I could not hear distinctly what Joseph said when he fell, but it seemed to me to be, 'O Lord, My God.' That was all he said. I think he raised himself to a sitting position. A young man went up and struck him either with the end of his gun or a bayonet, after he was dead, you may say. I did not notice whether they fired into him after he was set up by the well. I have the idea, however, that the young man went up to him and ran his bayonet through him, or rushed at him with his gun. I do not believe there was a gun fired after he struck the ground, and still I may be mistaken. I tell you those bullets came instantaneously.

"I did not notice any one raise a knife for the purpose of severing Joseph's head from his body, but I heard at the time that a young man did so. Those things might have been true. I was not one of the mob, but was one of the disbanded posse. I was going to the pasture after my horse, and was so close at the time that if I had been dressed like the mob I might have been considered one of their number. The young man who struck Joseph claimed to be a son of Governor Boggs. He rushed from the mob after Joseph was set up and struck him with the point of his gun or bayonet, and said, 'G—d—n you; you are the man that had my father shot.' Of course Joseph Smith might have been alive with the bullets in his body, and have set himself up. I am satisfied he was alive then. If a gun was fired at him after he fell from the window I don't remember it. My memory is dim on some things, but I know there was great excitement just at the time.

"The firing was all done in a moment. Then there was a sort of recognition between the Carthage Greys and the mob, as they mingled together