

have a right to look into; to look well after our liberties, and to watch well our enemies. For these are not only our enemies but they are the enemies of human liberty, the enemies of the rights of man and the enemies of God. It is for us to look well after these things, and in our elections and in all like matters, to see that we are very particular about the management of these affairs, and that we are not overrun and cheated out of our liberties by unscrupulous men. I speak of these things at this your Conference, for your information and for your warning; and would say, be united, diligent and energetic, and stand for your rights as men.

I remember some little time ago a gentleman named Mr. Pierpont (who was Attorney-General under President Grant) called upon me. I was pleased to see him, and am pleased to see all honorable gentlemen. I invited him to dinner, and we had quite a chat. But here let me introduce another affair. At the time when the Edmunds law was passed I was living in what is known as the Gardo House. I had most of my wives living with me there, and after looking carefully over the Edmunds law I thought to myself, why Congress is growing very wild; this Government is getting very, very foolish; they are trampling upon Constitutional rights. No matter, I said, I will obey this law. I had comfortable places for my family elsewhere, and I requested my wives to go to their own homes, and live there, and they did so in order that I at least might fulfill that part of the law; for foolish or not foolish, my idea was to fulfill as far as practicable the requirements of the law and not place myself and my family or my friends in jeopardy, through any foolishness of mine.

It was expected by many of those corrupt men—I do not say in speaking of these that all are corrupt—that when these laws were passed we should turn our wives out and deal with them as they do with their women under such circumstances—make strumpets of them. There is no such feeling as that in my bosom, nor in the bosoms of this people. We have made eternal covenants with our wives, and we will abide by our wives, and God will sustain us in protecting the rights of innocence, and in fulfilling those eternal obligations which we have entered into. But we can once in a while yield a little to the follies and weaknesses of men, when no principle of truth is involved. Under these circumstances I had a sister of mine who was keeping house for me when Mr. Pierpont came there to dine with me. I said: “Mr. Pierpont, permit me to introduce you to my sister. It is not lawful for us to have wives here.” (Laughter.) After talking further with him upon the subject I said, “Now, Mr. Pierpont, you are well acquainted with all these legal affairs. Although I have yielded in this matter in order that I might not be an obstructionist, and do not wish to act as a Fenian, or a Nihilist, or a Communist, or a Kuklux, or a Regulator, or a Plug Ugly, or a Molly Maguire, yet, sir, we shall stand up for our rights and protect ourselves in every proper way, legally and constitutionally, and dispute inch by inch every step that is taken to deprive us of our rights and liberties.” And we will do this in the way that I speak of. We are doing it today; and as you have heard it expressed on other occasions, it looks very much like as though the time was drawing near when this country will tumble to pieces; for if the people of this nation are so blind and in-