

[Here the speaker vigorously struck the book on the desk, and the large audience responded with a loud "Amen."] The Constitution expressly says that no law shall be passed impairing the obligation of contracts. But we have entered into covenants and contracts in our most sacred places, and that, too, in many instances, before there was any law prohibiting the same, and yet the attempt is now being made to give the Edmunds law an *ex post facto* application and to punish us for these contracts which were not criminal, even from the standpoint of our enemies, at the time they were formed. I myself married my wives long before there was any law upon the subject, and many of you did the same, yet by an *ex post facto* application of laws since enacted the attempt is now made to punish us as criminals. I have never broken any law of these United States, and I presume that some of you, whom our enemies now seek to criminate and drag into court as violators of law, can say the same. Under the present system of things in this Territory, harlotry and adultery are vindicated, sustained and unblushingly protected, and honorable and virtuous wedlock is trampled upon, condemned and punished. Well, what will you do? I will obey every Constitutional law so far as God gives me ability. What else will you do? I will meet these men as far as I can without violating principle, and I have done it. When this infamous Edmunds law was passed, I saw that there were features in that which were contrary to law, violative of the Constitution, contrary to justice and the rights and the freedom of men. But I said to myself I will let that law take its course; I will place myself in accordance with it, so far as I can. Did I do it?

I did. I remember talking to Mr. Pierrepont, who was Attorney-General under President Grant's administration. He with his son called upon me. They dined with me, and perhaps I can explain my views on this subject by repeating our conversation as well as any other way. I have a sister keeping my house for me—the Gardo House. When Mr. Pierrepont came in, I said:

"Mr. Pierrepont, permit me to introduce you to my sister, who is my house-keeper. It is not lawful for us to have wives now. And when the Edmunds law was passed I looked carefully over the document, and saw that if I was to continue to live in the same house with my wives that I should render myself liable to that law. I did not wish—although I considered the law infamous—to be an obstructionist, or act the part of a Fenian, or of a Nihilist, or of a Kuklux, or communist, or Molly Maguire, or any of those secret societies that are set on foot to produce the disintegration of society and disturb the relations that ought to exist between man and man, between man and woman, or man and his God. I desired to place myself in obedience or in as close conformity as practicable to the law, and thought I would wait and see what the result would be; and that if the nation can stand these things I can or we can. These are my feelings. Men and nations and legislators often act foolishly, and do things that are unwise, and it is not proper that a nation should be condemned for the unwise actions of some few men. Therefore I have sought to place myself in accord with that law. I said to my wives: "We are living in this building together. We were quite comfortably situated, and we might so have continued, but I said to them