[Here the speaker vigorously struck the
book on the desk, and the large audi-
cence 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 sa-
cred places, and that, too, in many in-
stances, before there was any law pro-
hibiting 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 sub-
ject, 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 sys-
tem of things in this Territory, harlotry
and adultery are vindicated, sustained
and unblushingly protected, and honor-
able and virtuous wedlock is trampled
upon, condemned and punished. Well,
what will you do? I will obey every Con-
stitutional law so far as God gives me
ability. What else will you do? I will meet
these men as far as I can without violat-
ing 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 accor-
dance with it, so far as I can. Did I do it?
I did. I remember talking to Mr. Pierre-
pon, 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. Pierrepon
came in, I said:

"Mr. Pierrepon, permit me to intro-
duce 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 con-
tinue 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 Fe-
nian, 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 soci-
ety 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 fool-
ishly, 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