Mr. WOODBRIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to discuss this question at any length. The��傲 history of the subject is too well known to occupy its discussion for several days, and I have no idea that any arguments that I may advance, or any views that I may submit, will alter the vote of any member upon the floor. But, sir, great responsibilities rest upon the members of the present Congress. We are not writing history, which is difficult; we are making history, which is difficult still. The footprints of this Congress will be upon the rocks of the mountains. National and political convulsions may cause: republics may rise and fall. Systems of government may be created and destroyed: but never, so long as the earth rolls, will the footprints which this Congress makes be effaced from history.

Sir, there has never been a day since the foundation of this Government when all the candor, the calmness, the deliberation, the foresight, the wisdom of Congress has been so intensely demanded for us, our future glory, launched forth upon an unknown sea in a ship of state made without a model, and doubtless anticipated that during the voyage tempests might arise, and that the strength of the ship and develop its weakness, if any existed; and that repairs might be necessary. For many years preceding the winds filled her sails. Breakers and tides the sea of commerce seriously threatened her; the waves never rose high enough to beat upon and wrench from its place the safety-valve and counterweight which covered her side. But in the providence of God the tempest has come, and the rotten plank has been wrested from its place; the old ship trembled from her roots to her bowprit, but, thank God, she rode out the storm, and now she needs, in my judgment, some slight repairs. The plank of slavery to be replaced by the plank of law and order. We are told that now is not the time to make repairs; that we are not calm enough to do it; that we are surrounded by influences which have excited our passions; that the disappointment which has come upon the majority of this House has unsettled the calmness of their reason and rendered it impossible for them to give that deliberation which the greatness of this subject demands. Sir, a general in time of war and danger is calmest and bravest; the sailor may rest in the cabin, but when the storm comes and breakers are ahead, every man is a helmsman. The ship must be saved, and here and there a sailor loses his life.

I believe the present condition of things a great number of amendments have been proposed in the Constitution. Many of them, in my judgment, are improper, and most of them are violently wrong. And have not permit me to say, that when an amendment to the Constitution is proposed, it should receive the candid, careful, cautious, and thoughtful investigation of every member. I hope we shall not be called upon to amend the Constitution, but if we are, I hope we shall be called upon to amend the Constitution, but if we are, I hope we shall be allowed the task of the previous question. It should be applied. It is some-what dangerous to meddle with the great charter of our liberties, and that it is a tempest with it the less scorn it seems to be, and no amendment should be entertained unless under the present condition of the country—a country which has been stripped through two foreign wars with safety, and that in all respects it has protected the liberty of the citizen. Like the gentleman, I have been taught to admire the dictate and proper ad-justment of the rights and powers of the States and of the General Government, whereby centralization, always dangerous to the Republic, cannot exist on the one hand, and untrammeled license, because always dangerous to the liberty of the people, cannot exist upon the other; and had all the people done right there would not at this time have been the need for any constitutional amendments.

But, sir, through the last power of the har-mony of our Government has been destroyed. New social and political relations have been established. Four million people have been born in a day. The shackles have been stricken from four million separate chattels, and they have become inhuman living, thinking, moving, suffering, responsible beings, and citizens of the United States.

And if Congress does not do something to provide for these people, if they do not prove equal to their duty, and come up to their work like men, the condition of those people will be worse than it was before. The accumulated prejudices of centuries, together with the unmitigated wrath of those who have held them in bondage, but by reason of the rebellion can no longer hold property in man, will culminate upon their heads.

And what is the duty of the American people toward these men? Is it sufficient that we have merely knocked the shackles from their limbs? Is it sufficient that we have made them free? in am and left them cold, hungry, and naked, without the power of attaining one of those civil natural rights which make freedom not only a name but a power? Is that all that the American Congress and the American people are to do with those people who by the result of war and the constitutional amendment are come forth from a state of bondage into a state of freedom?

But it may be said that all this may be done by legislation. I am rather inclined to think that the most of it may be so accomplished. But the experience of this Congress in that regard has been most unfortunate. Sir, I cast no imputation upon the President of the Uni-ted States. I believe him to be honest, patriotic, and patriotic, and I pray God that the sea of discord may become quiet, and that the President and Congress, acting together, firmly, manfully, and for the right, may preserve the great party of freedom, upon which, in my judgment, depends not only the liberty of the Republic, but the advancement of free principles and of Christian civilization throughout the world. But inasmuch as the President, honestly, I have no doubt, has told us that there were constitutional difficulties in the way, I simply suggest that we submit the proposition to the people, that they may remove these objections by amending the instrument itself.

What is the object of the proposed amen-dment? It merely gives the power to Congress to enact those laws which will give to a citizen of the United States the natural rights which necessarily pertain to citizenship. It is intended to enable Congress by its amendments when neces-sary to give to a citizen of the United States, in whatever State he may be, those privileges and immunities which are guarantied to him under the Constitution of the United States. It is intended to enable Congress to give to all citizens the inalienable rights of life and liberty, and to every citizen in whatever State he may be that protection to his property which is extended to the other citizens of the State.

Sir, is there anything anti-republican in this? Is there anything wrong in this? Is there anything which interferes with the sovereign power of a State that adheres to a republican form of government? Is there not rather this a tendency to keep the States within their orbit, and by what the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. Ruskjus] would call the "organic law," insure and secure forever to every citizen of the United States the privileges and immunities of a republican form of government? There is nothing more, there is nothing less, in this proposition. It does not destroy the sovereignty of a State, if such a thing exists. It does not even affect its