

## *MARE LIBERUM.*

the rules (which she has since disregarded) that anchored mines should be constructed so as to become harmless when released, that unanchored mines should have only a short life of mischief, and that minefields should be notified to all trading countries. She thus insisted upon a serious restriction of the freedom of the seas in time of war. Her motive was obvious. She desired to use the mine against the naval and mercantile shipping of the stronger naval power, and she was indifferent as to the effect upon neutrals. In this question America took little interest, but on the whole supported Britain. So far as this question was concerned, Britain was the strongest advocate of the freedom of the seas. It may be said that British interests demanded the maximum degree of freedom for peaceful trade, and no doubt that is so. But a power whose supreme interest it is that other powers should be free to use the seas can scarcely be described as the enemy of the freedom of the seas!

Britain also put forward some further proposals, designed in the interest of neutrals. In the first place she proposed that the destruction of neutral vessels should be absolutely prohibited under all circumstances; even when they were carrying contraband, and their captors were not in a position to bring them into port, they must not be destroyed; if they could not be brought before a properly constituted prize-court, they must be released. This had, in fact, been the British rule for 200 years; a rule enforced by her own prize-courts. How great a safeguard it would have been for neutral freedom to use the seas, the experience of this war may testify. But Germany would have none of this restriction. She insisted upon the right of destruction in the case of neutral ships carrying con-