

THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS.

real interpretation of the freedom of the seas. Yet Britain and her allies do not employ this elusive phrase as it is employed by their adversaries.

What will happen to the freedom of the seas after the war? If Germany wins, it may be established in the German sense: that is, belligerent commerce may be made as free as neutral commerce, both being left open to very great restrictions and dangers; but if the German victory is complete, and she becomes supreme on sea as on land, she is not unlikely to forget her interest in this cry, and to use her power to restrain the free movement of commerce in peace as well as in war. Of one thing, however, we may be sure: so long as the military spirit continues to dominate Germany, her action will be governed solely by considerations affecting her own military interests—which are not identical with the interests of neutrals.

If the Allies win, it is likely that what we have called the British interpretation of freedom of the seas will be established; that is to say, neutrals will be safeguarded as far as is possible consistently with the maintenance of the chief weapon of a naval power, the right of attack upon enemy commerce.

As for the American view, which draws no distinction between enemy commerce and neutral commerce, but only between private property and State property, it is unlikely to be adopted unless America is able to dictate the terms of peace. And there are two reasons for hoping that it will not be adopted, in the interest of the freedom of the seas itself—the freedom of the seas in times of peace as well as of war. The first is, that it would lend itself to grave disputes and to graver abuses.