

## ***THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS.***

assume that the freedom of the seas, even in time of peace, would be again endangered, as they were when Spain was supreme at once on land and sea. If naval supremacy were to fall into the hands of any State (1) which was so formidable on land as to terrorise other powers, (2) which was not inspired by a dominating tradition of liberty, and (3) which believed in the value of commercial monopoly and the destruction or weakening of trade-rivals, we may be very sure that restrictions would frequently be imposed upon the use of some of the world's sea-going highways. This situation would arise, for example, if Germany should be completely victorious in the present war. It is true that America would remain unconquered. But America would probably not risk the perils of war (for example) to secure the free use of the Eastern Mediterranean or the Suez Canal for all the world.

The freedom of the seas, then, in times of peace, cannot be taken for granted as secure beyond all possibility of challenge. Its maintenance is dependent upon the exercise of supreme naval authority and the duty of sea-police either by a common government of the civilised world (which is still far distant), or by some power which, owing to its own position, traditions and methods, can safely be trusted not to abuse this supremacy. This is by far the most important aspect of the problem of the freedom of the seas. It is to be hoped that the civilised world will not overlook it by concentrating its attention upon the minor question of the free use of the seas in time of war.

In time of war it is, in the nature of things, inevitable that full freedom of movement on the seas should be in some degree qualified, not only for belligerents but