In the Far East.

There has been some idle talk in England about a war with Russia over China. It is senseless because there is no adequate cause for fighting.

Many years ago England had a war with China, and obtained Hongkong, which has been converted into a centre of trade and a naval station. Russia has merely done what England had previously done. There can be no cause for war.

England, moreover, has asked that these ports shall remain open to shipping under all flags on equal terms. Russia has agreed that the ports of Manchuria shall be free, or at least open to the world's commerce. When the Siberian Railway is completed foreign commerce will not be driven away, but attracted. Bnsiness interests will prevail.

If England were to insist upon fighting for the sake of maintaining her prestige in the Far East, it would be an unequal battle on both sea and land. The Russian fleet might be destroyed in the Pacific, but Manchuria could not be occupied and conquered without a land campaign, in which the English would be at a serious disadvantage.

Russia, moreover, would have other means of harassing the English. The northwestern frontier of India is exposed at many points, and there are railways by which Russian armies might be readily massed within striking distance of Herat or Chitral. England has nothing to gain and much to lose from a war with Russia. She would have no Europeon ally for a conflict equally dangerous and unprofitable.

Equally unlikely is a war between England and either Germany or France over the possession of naval stations and ports on the Chinese sea-board. So long as Hongkong is retained by England, she cannot reasonably object to the occupation of other ports for similar purposes by rival powers; nor will there be just cause of war so long as those new ports remain open to all foreign flags.

But as an offset to the acquisition of Port Arthur by Russia, England demanded and has secured Wei-hai-wei which will enable her to check Russia should occasion arise. The British government was thus compelled to adopt a policy which it has been strenuously resisting, although it first set the example.

The Chinese government is so weak and helpless that England cannot attempt to protect it single-handed against foreign aggression. China is not in a position to accept such a protectorate. It is clear that Russia, France and Germany will not allow her to become dependent upon England.

Whatever happens, American interests are not likely to suffer. The policy of open ports for the shipping of all nations is now advocated by all these rival powers.

Privateers.

A Privateer is a ship, owned and manned by private persons, commissioned by a government to wage war. The inducement to individuals to undertake the expense of privateering is to make money, since the ships they may capture, with the cargoes, become for the most part their property.

The special function of privateers is to prey upon merchants ships. They have been defended upon the ground that seizure of an enemy's private property of whatever character is legitimate warfare, since to impair his wealth must weaken his fighting power. Thomas Jefferson, during the war 1812-14, wrote, "Let nothing be spared to encourage them;" and American privateers in that war certainly did enormous damage to British commerce.

Yet to-day the best opinion is against their use. Authorities like Captain Mahan have shown that privateers do not effect the issue of wars, which are decided by navies on the sea, or by armies on the land. Atrocious as war may be, the nineteenth century has witnessed a strong and concerted effort to reduce its horrors and losses to the lowest terms.

The interests of commerce are so universal that naturally the great maritime powers have tried to save private property from unneccessary ravages. In 1856, the famous Declaration of Paris was signed by Great Britaiu, France, Prussia, Austria, Russian, Turkey and Sardinia;—"Privateering is and remains abolished."

Most of the other nations became signers of the declaration, but not Spain or the United States. Our government, not wishing to refuse to sign when asked to do so in 1856, agreed to join in the declaration if it were made more sweeping. The other powers declined to adopt what was known as the Marcy amendment—as they were expected to do.

In 1861, when the Confederate government proposed to "issue letters of marque," that is, to commission privateers, Secretary Seward offered to sign the Declaration of Paris; but England and France objected. Since then the matter has not been discussed.

The Cuban trouble have drawn special attention to the fact that Spain has not signed the Declaration of Paris. In case of war with the United States, Spain's privateers could inflict but slight damage because our foreign trade moves largely in foreign ships. In war, even more than in peace, our goods would be carried under neural flag protects from seizure the goods of a belligerent, not contraband of war, that a weak maritime power like Spain would hardly dare to violate it.—Youth's Companion (American.)