EDITORIAL

The Way To Make Him Understand

By DANIEL DE LEON

Congressman Morse of the Plymouth district of Massachusetts is not ready to
recognize the belligerency of the Cuban insurgents. “I do not understand,” he
says, “what there is in Cuba to recognize; the insurgents have no government, no
constitution, no port of entry.”

It is a well-known trick of detectives, when they suspect a suspicious character of
sailing under a false name, to have someone suddenly cry out in his neighborhood the
name he is supposed to be hiding. If the suspicion is correct, the suspect will, ten to
one, start up and thus give himself away. The ancient classic story tells how the
warrior Achilles was detected in the prince’s home where he was hiding in female
attire with the women folks. Ulysses entered the palace in the disguise of a peddler
and exhibited to the women his wares—beads, laces, and combs. The actual women
showed much interest in the knick-knacks, only one seemed uninterested. To make
assurance doubly sure, Ulysses then, as if by accident, uncovered a sword. The women
jumped back, but Achilles grasped the weapon with avidity and flourished it. This act
betrayed him. Again, there is an old myth that has come down as a nursery tale of a
cat having been transformed into a princess, and, her evil genius being set upon to
expose her, took occasion to set a mouse loose in the midst of a ball: all the women ran
away, but the nature of the transformed cat prevailed over appearances, she leaped
upon the mouse, the spell was broken, the cat-princess became a cat again, and was
chased back into the kitchen. So should the sternness of Representative Morse
towards “rebels” be brought to the test.

Representative Morse is a manufacturer of a certain stove polish; to promote the sales
of his stuff he leaves unturned no stone; even in his church, of which he is an elder, he
fails not in his exhortations to allude to the wonder of his goods. All that the Cuban
belligerents need to do is to convey to “Rising Sun” Morse information about the
increased chances of selling his stove polish in Cuba just so soon as the Spaniards are
put out. If the insurgents get into the papers some statements to convey the
impression that the Spaniards use few if any stoves, whereas the rebels dote on stoves, they will see Morse suddenly “understand what there is in Cuba to recognize.” Like the man who sails under a false name, starts at the sound of his own, or the warrior snorts for battle, despite his woman’s disguise, at the sight of a sword, or the cat transformed into a princess suddenly drops her courtly manners and becomes cat again at the sight of a mouse—so will the opinions of U.S. Congressman and stove-polish manufacturer Morse undergo a complete transformation so soon as he can see “a bargain.”

The prospect of a sale, of selling both a bit of merchandise and its purchaser, is the loadstar of the capitalist; it is the one thing that sways his judgment and his actions, his morality and his religion.