

EDITORIAL

ANENT THE POE COTTAGE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONE day last month the newspapers announced that the real estate boom, that had invaded Fordham, had broken ground for a towering apartment house on a certain spot in Kingsbridge Road.

When that apartment house is up it will overtop the cottage in which Edgar Allan Poe lived, and the little grove in which Poe strolled with “Annabel Lee,” “Ulalume,” “The Bells” and “The Cask of Amontillado” shaping themselves in his brain, partly as a relief to the agony of knowing that his wife lay dying in the cottage, partly in the effort to raise some little funds whereby to mitigate the gnawing poverty that was hastening and adding pungency to her death. When that apartment house is up it will overtop and eclipse the Poe Cottage—as significantly as many a factory, or political monument of Capital now eclipses and overtops many a church, the one-time monument of Feudal Rule.

Even in Europe the sight is occasionally come across. In America it is not uncommon. From the window where this article is written the spectacle constantly winks upon this desk—the spectacle of a church, once a landmark, disdainfully looked down upon, from one side by a towering factory, from another side, by the still more towering Municipal Building still under construction.

Under paganism the Temples were expressions of art. When Christianity became a political power the churches, basilicas, as they were then called, became the real seat of government—at first covertly, finally, when feudalism took root, more and more openly, until “The State” became nothing but the constabulary, or mailed hand for the Church. Church architecture then overtopped even royal palaces. As to buildings for making money, these were as mere vermin besides the church buildings.

How markedly all that has changed one only needs to look around to ascertain.

Some consider the change a change for the worse; others consider it a change for the better. For better, or for worse, the change being a permanent one, records the march of Civilization.

Is the same thing to be said of the Vandalic desecration of Poe's cottage, now going on in Kingsbridge Road, at the hand of the Fordham real estate boomers? While gathering the information necessary to draw a conclusion and express it, the spectacle of a mammoth apartment house,—one of the monuments of the pervert uses that the private ownership of land, aided and partly caused by the swollen tide of a homeless population—the spectacle of such a structure dwarfing a Poe's Cottage out of sight, may give cause for reflection, and maybe a steerer to the correct conclusion.

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