

**THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ART:
TWO DISCOURSES
DELIVERED IN THE
LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF ART**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649421084

The Sovereignty of Art: Two Discourses Delivered in the Liverpool School of Art by Charles Sharp

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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CHARLES SHARP

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Philip H. Holt 259.
With the Author's Regards

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BY
CHARLES SHARP

LONDON:
T. FISHER UNWIN, 26, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1888.



**The Portico de la Gloria of
Mestre Mateo.**

THE PORTICO DE LA GLORIA OF MESTRE MATEO.

ON the northern coast of Spain, there stands, breasting the wild Atlantic waves, a great Cape, having passed which you enter what is, of all places in this world, the Bay of Storms. Straight over the topmost height of this headland, across the dreary Galician plain, some fifteen Spanish leagues as the crow flies, stands the Cathedral of Santiago,—dedicated to that Father of Pilgrims, St. James of Compostella,—a cathedral to which, for centuries, many a weary man has come with painful feet; on gaily caparisoned mule; or in jolting carriage, over the roads that lie between the shrine and Rome on the south, or Paris and the cities of France to the north; or by old English ways

that led through Kentish valleys and over Sussex downs to the sea, that so frequently proved a greater terror to the pilgrim than the rough roads, with their dreary distances, and not uncommon perils.

But this place, to which "cockle hat and staff and the sandal shoon" tended so long and so numerous, was, when the eyes at last beheld it, a joyous sight for the beauty it revealed, and for the many tokens of fearful faith and simple piety visible in its exterior wealth of sculptured stone; and in its interior, marvellously wrought and fashioned into nave, transepts, and chancel, in which latter stood an altar, all ablaze with votive offerings of jewels and gold.

Across the Silversmiths' Square, by the Pilgrims' Hostel, and over-rich in Renaissance stone carvings and columns, the great west front towers before the beholder. Within this temple,

built with hands no further back than the last century, is another church, the mother sanctuary, upon the delicate and wondrous details of which tender thoughts and loving hands worked seven hundred years ago, when shrines were many, and pilgrims apt to go on pilgrimage. Inside the great iron-studded door you are but between the casket and the gorgeous thing it holds. Like a carved Indian ball, inserted cunningly within its fellow, is this exquisite Gothic church of the twelfth century, the masterpiece of Mestre Mateo, sculptor and architect.

Over the "Portal of Glory," like a rainbow of subdued colours, stretches from the northern to the southern heaven, a sculptured arch worth a king's ransom to behold for once, though life-long darkness followed the vision,—the great company of the Apostles; the Angelic Choir, with sackbut and harp,