

**THE SUBSTANCE OF GOTHIC: SIX  
LECTURES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
ARCHITECTURE FROM  
CHARLEMAGNE TO HENRY VIII, GIVEN  
AT THE LOWELL INSTITUTE, BOSTON IN  
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1916**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649715879

The Substance of Gothic: Six Lectures on the Development of Architecture from Charlemagne to Henry VIII, Given at the Lowell Institute, Boston in November and December, 1916 by Ralph Adams Cram

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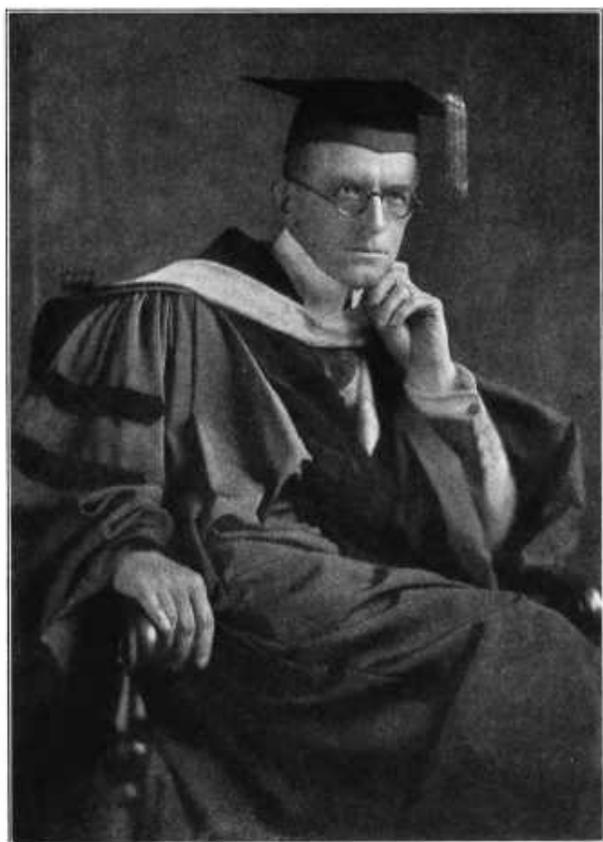
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**RALPH ADAMS CRAM**

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**THE SUBSTANCE OF GOTHIC**



*W. H. Lawrence*

# THE SUBSTANCE OF GOTHIC

*Six Lectures on the Development  
of Architecture from  
Charlemagne to  
Henry VIII*

GIVEN AT THE LOWELL INSTITUTE, BOSTON  
IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1916

By

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BOSTON  
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY

MDCCCXVII

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Published September, 1917

PRINTED BY  
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

## PREFACE

IN philosophical terminology every existing thing is composed of substance and accidents, the first being its essential quality, the second its visible form. Accidents may change while the substance remains immutable, and the substance may change though the accidents remain as before. Between the cradle and the grave man goes through a constant process of change, but that which makes each a definite individual, marked off from all others of his race in unique individuality, remains a fixed and immutable ego, however much it may develop and expand, or degenerate and fail. Death itself, which destroys the accidents of earthly housing, cannot touch the immortal soul or diminish its integrity, though the visible manifestation may differ as much from that of its earthly habitation as the moth differs from the chrysalis or the antecedent worm. So in the case of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the words of con-

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✓ secretion and the miracle that follows thereon have no effect on the accidents of form, shape, colour, ponderability, but the substance has been wholly changed, and though to the senses the wafer is still but a white disk of unleavened bread, the wine but the fermented juice of the grape, the one has become, *in substance*, the very Body of Christ, the other His sacred Blood.

✓ For four centuries and more it has been the fashion to deny this fundamental difference between substance and accidents, to maintain that the accidents are in fact the substance itself, and perilously to confuse, in every category of thought and action, the essential "thing in itself," with the casual and transient forms of its manifestations. The war is at the same time the penalty of this folly and its drastic corrective. Whatever may be its issue, one thing is sure, and that is its operation towards breaking all things into their component parts of inner fact and outward appearance: its merciful revelation of the illusory nature of the visible forms of the commonly accepted dogmas and axioms of four centuries, and of the eternal verity of things long hidden under deceitful masks, of the eternal falsity

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of things that had come before us in appealing and ingratiating guise.

I have called these lectures, given during the winter of 1916-17 in the Lowell Institute course in Boston, "The Substance of Gothic," because in them an effort is made, though briefly and superficially, to deal with the development of Christian architecture from Charlemagne to Henry VIII, rather in relation to its substance than its accidents; to consider it as a definite and growing organism and as the exact and unescapable exponent of a system of life and thought antipodal to that of the modernism that began its final dissolution at the beginning of August A.D. 1914, rather than in the light of its accidents of form and ornament and details of structural design. Art was always the expression of the best in any people and in any time, until the last generation when, if we are to retain any belief that then there was a definite "best," we must hold that it changed its nature and became, if not the manifestation of the worst, at least that of a very low average. During the period with which I deal there is no question on this point; between the fall of Rome and the triumph of the Renaissance