

**FAY HOUSE MONOGRAPHS
NO. 4: THE PERSONAL
CHARACTER OF DANTE AS
REVEALED IN HIS WRITINGS**

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Lucy Allen Paton

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LUCY ALLEN PATON

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*PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE COLLEGIATE INSTRUCTION
OF WOMEN*

Fay House Monographs

No. 4

THE
PERSONAL CHARACTER OF DANTE
AS
REVEALED IN HIS WRITINGS

BY
LUCY ALLEN PATON

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THIS essay has been somewhat revised since the award of the Sarah Greene Timmins Prize. The greater part of the alterations I owe to the valuable suggestions and patient help of Professor Charles Eliot Norton, for whose guidance in the study of Dante I would express my constant sense of gratitude.

L. A. P.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
October 25, 1892.

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THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF DANTE,

AS

REVEALED IN HIS WRITINGS.

BY LUCY ALLEN PATON.

BEING

THE ESSAY BY A MEMBER OF THE CLASSES OF THE SOCIETY
FOR THE COLLEGIATE INSTRUCTION FOR WOMEN, IN
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., TO WHICH "THE SARA
GREENE TIMMINS PRIZE" WAS
AWARDED IN 1891.

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THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF DANTE.¹

ACCORDING to one of the historians of Florence there was to be found among her records of the last years of the thirteenth century a decree, the equal of which in loftiness and significance of expression few cities could boast: "Whereas it is the highest concern of a people of illustrious origin so to proceed in their affairs that men may perceive from their works that their designs are at once wise and magnanimous, it is therefore ordered that Arnolfo, architect of our commune, prepare the model or plan for the rebuilding of Santa Reparata, with such supreme and lavish magnificence that neither the industry nor the capacity of man shall be able to devise anything more grand or more beautiful; inasmuch as the most judicious in this city have declared and advised in public and private conferences that no work of the commune should be undertaken, unless the design be to make it correspondent with a heart which is of the greatest nature, because composed of the spirit of many citizens concordant in one single will."² Although the decree be apocryphal, this was the spirit which expressed itself in the sublime works that fill Florence to-day with rich associations. Italy was flushed with the intense intellectual excitement of the century. After a long period of dormant thought, France had felt the first impulse toward self-expression. By the

¹ The texts used have been Scartazzini's for the *Divina Commedia*, and Fraticelli's for the *Opere Minori*. Where a translation has been quoted, that of the *Divine Comedy* by Longfellow has been used; that of the *New Life* by Norton.

² Del Migliore, *Firenze, Città Nobilissima*, 1684, p. 6; translated in Norton's "Church Building in the Middle Ages," p. 189.