

LITERARY DEPARTMENT

MISS RUTTAN, Editor

A COMPARISON OF IDEALS.

Based on Browning's "Grammarian's Funeral" and Tennyson's "Ulysses."
[The Literary Society's Prize Essay]

The best apology I can make for attempting any treatment of this subject is that the poems of which I write are poems of strong interest to any young man, and of especial interest to a young collegian. The ideals which take form in his mind under college influences, find here noblest embodiment. The atmosphere of the poems is a congenial one, he thrills with its oxygen, feels it "rarer, intenser" than the common air.

Both poems draw their life from the spirit of the Renaissance. It is of the atmosphere of that time they breathe. It seems to me that the history of the Renaissance, that history which will revitalize the period, will be written by a young man. It was an age of great young men—the age of Niccolo Machiavelli, of Raffaele de Sanzo, of Girolamo Savonarola, and closer and more real to us, it was the age of the Greek Tito, of the Dutch Gerard, of Browning's del Sarto and Landor's Ser Francesco. Perhaps the Renaissance period of the world's life, with its strange mixture of dawning catholicity and an intolerance flaring up before final extinction, of refining tastes and a sensuality exhibiting itself in scarcely preceded grossness—a period fermenting with the new wine of thought, a ferment from which the turbidity had not yet settled—finds its individual counterpart in the mind of the young man. And so, to a young man, when the beliefs, the ideals of his earlier life must be revised in the light of so much new and strange, when from the solution of the old by the powerful solvent of new ideas, recrystallization commences—the process of forming mature ideals begins—these poems come straight home.

They are, it seems to me, strikingly alike, and yet in many ways strikingly different.

The hero of each is a hero because of his unfaltering pursuit of a high ideal. Called to that pursuit, unhesitatingly, fearlessly, he left all and followed.