



EXECUTIVE EXCERPTS.

ON LITERARY SOCIETIES.

The first College or University Literary Societies were in the nature of a revolt against narrowness, hard-and-fast conditions, oracular assertions on the part of alleged instructors, and undue devotion to medieval methods in education. The demand for live topics and for freedom of discussion led to this volunteer work outside of the curriculum. It was almost the only breath of fresh air that ever reached the inner cloisters of the earlier schools. The subjects treated were sufficiently grave but were not antiquated, the discussions were free and strong without loss of dignity. The work differed from that of the curriculum in that it was the work of young men rather than of old men, and that it looked forward rather than backward.

In the new world the school district became if not the unit of political life at least the inscribed circle of social life. The school house (which then as now was often the

general "meeting house") was the one place towards which social, civil, religious and educational lines converged. Under these conditions arose meetings half social, half literary; partly for amusement, partly for profitable instruction; with a program that would attract both young and old, the wise and the otherwise. For many years these gatherings, under various names, were popular and successful; nor have they yet entirely lost their hold on public favor. The "Liter'y" is not unknown in many school districts in Nebraska and other western states.

With tradition in favor of something of this sort in connection with institutions of higher learning, and with impressions of the "Liter'y" quite clearly in mind, it is not difficult to understand how University Literary Societies in the west took on their present shape and form. They are a composite; and not always with features in equipoise. There is a tendency at least towards undue