week or two, and when the elections are once over the Franchise Leagues can disband and re-organise themselves into some other association or affiliation as has been very properly suggested. They must and will be governed greatly now by what their male relations tell them of the standing candidates. They have not time to find out much for themselves, nor to make up their minds on political questions. They will have found their feet in three years, and will have watched the progress of the men for whom they have voted—supposing they are returned—and have decided whether or not their politics are what they—the women—approve. At present, as far as I can judge, there are very few women in the colony who really understand any of the great questions of the day. It is kind of some women to undertake to guide these innocents over the tempestuous waters of contested elections. They may be blind leaders of the blind, or perhaps they have a glimmer of light, which from no vanity—so I take it—from no desire for notoriety, but from a helpful, kindly spirit, they wish to diffuse over the track of those who have less leisure and fewer opportunities of studying the political chart than they. One thing is certain, that these Franchise Leagues—especially their presidents and committees—have won female suffrage for themselves and for other women, who, though unwilling to work, are by no means unwilling to enjoy the fruits of other people's labour. To these workers, then, belongs the right, if there be a right, whether under the name they have borne so long or not—of drawing up "suggestions" or "platforms," or whatever they like to call their little plans and queries. At all events it is a woman's question, and so far as we are at present concerned ends, for us, in smoke.'

TIMARU.

THIS is the point of divergence for Mount Cook. Timaru is an important and flourishing town. Architecturally it is an entire contrast to Oamaru. It has quarries of its own; but the Timaru stone is a very dark blue, and the town has a somewhat gloomy, but very solid appearance. Timaru has a great future before it, inasmuch as it is the outlet of a vast and fertile agricultural district. To prepare for this, its inhabitants have constructed a harbour. Heavy seas always run here, which makes it exceedingly dangerous to vessels. One of the saddest shipwrecks in New Zealand records occurred here not long since, when many valuable lives were lost. The buildings about Timaru, if not exactly handsome, are at any rate very substantial, and some of them are of striking proportions. The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company and the National Mortgage and Agency Company are well represented in this respect. The public schools and the new High Schools are a credit to the town. There are also an excellent athenæum, a theatre, and churches representative of the various denominations.

AUTHORS OF THE VICTORIAN ERA.

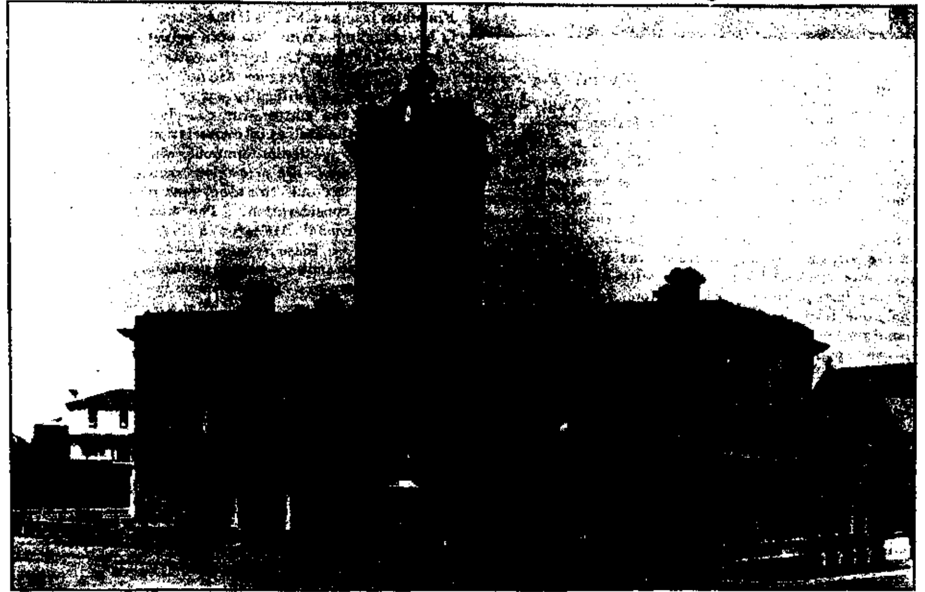
BY WILLIAM FRANCIS.

EDWARD LYTTON BULWER, LORD LYTTON.

MR SPECTATOR ADDISON, in one of his inimitable essays, assures us that it is impossible to read a book with satisfaction until one has ascertained whether the author of it be tall or short—corpulent or thin—and, as to complexion, whether he be a black man or a fair man, or a sallow man. But can anything be more untrue than this Spectatorial doctrine? Did ever the youngest of female novel readers on a sultry day decline to eat a bunch of grapes until she knew whether the fruiterer were a good-looking man? Which of you ever heard a stranger inquiring for a guide to the Lake district by saying 'I scruple, however, to pay for this book until I know whether the author is a Lakist?' In this mistake, however, lies a hidden truth—the sudden illumination of a propensity latent in all people. No reader cares about an author's person *before* reading his book; it is *after* reading. It is for his fun, his fancy, his sadness, possibly his eccentricity, that any reader cares about seeing the author in person, or gazing on his portrait, or reading the story of his life. It will be strange, then, and will certainly be our fault if we do not find it somewhat interesting to talk about a man who interested Europe for forty years—the author of 'Pelham,' 'Maltravers,' 'Eugene Aram,' 'The Caxtons,' and a number of books besides, and who was pronounced by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, no mean judge, to be 'the prose poet of his day.'

The accomplished and versatile poet and novelist sprung from the two ancient houses of the Bulwers and the Lyttons whose lineages date well back toward Adam and Eve. He take wine, he said, half jestingly, half peevishly, that "he hoped the doctor had not recommended his own favourite Madeira, for the bin was low and would not last two or three years longer." Thus saying he turned to the wall and asked for some tea. My mother went to prepare it, and when she returned he was in a gentle sleep. She stole from the room softly not to disturb him. But from that sleep he never awoke. Within an hour from the time she left him he was no more. His favourite little spaniel which sat on his pillow would not quit his remains, and when they were placed out of sight in the coffin it crept under the pall and died.'

On the death of his father the care of his education devolved on his mother—a woman of high intelligence and unusual culture and taste, who discharged the task with exemplary zeal and faithfulness. Under the fostering hand of his mother the mind of the boy expanded rapidly. With but few exceptions the men and women who have devoted themselves either to literature or art began to find delight in expressing their thoughts and feelings as soon as they could use pen and ink, brush and paint, for that purpose. What in after life has become the serious business of the



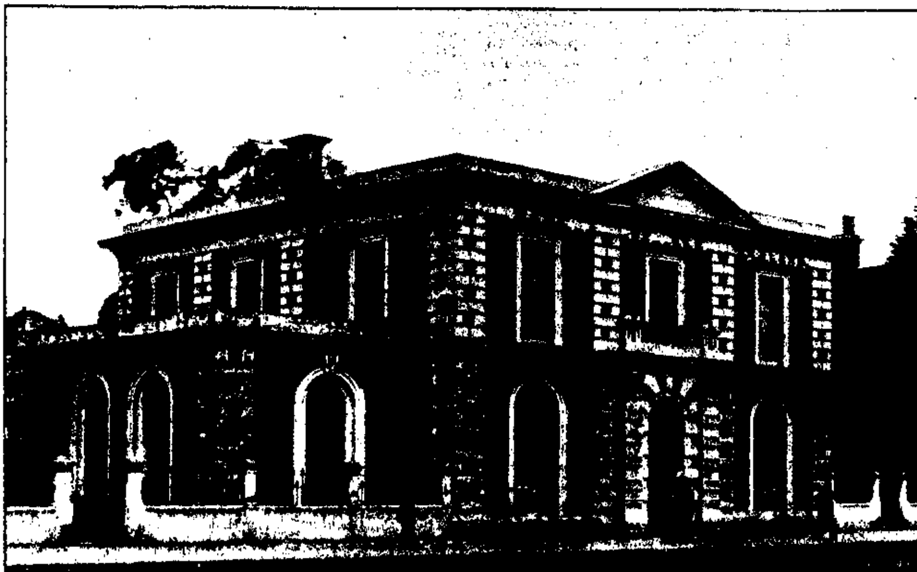
W. Ferrier, photo. GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND JUBILEE FOUNTAIN, TIMARU.

did not know the exact date of his birth, nor had he any care to know it. He says of it, in his 'Autobiography,' 'If some curious impertinents are anxious to know in what year of our Lord that event took place, let them find it out for themselves. For my own part, I have never had the least wish to know at what age any man whose life and writings inspired me with the least interest entered and left this bustling world.' And whenever questioned about it he would laughingly reply, 'It is a Cretan mystery.' He appears, however, to have been born in London in 1806. His father, General Bulwer, died in his early childhood, and in his 'Autobiography' referred to there is a pathetic description of his death:—

'He was at Heydon at the time. He had been suffering some days under one of his attacks of gout, and had taken to his bed, in which he lay amongst hoops that suspended from his body the touch of the clothes; for he could not bear even that pressure. No danger, however, was apprehended even by himself; for my mother telling him on the day of his death that the doctor had ordered William to

author or artist has commonly been the favourite amusement of the child. It was so with Turner, and it would have been sad for all concerned if Mr Turner, hairdresser in Marsden Lane, Covent Garden, had insisted that his son William should throw down his pencils and paint brushes and stick to the paternal scissors and soapsuds. It was so with young Bulwer. At six years of age he wrote verses, and his mother, believing with Dr. Hooker, one of his tutors that 'he had it in him to become a very remarkable man,' encouraged him in all his literary efforts. At fifteen years of age, like one of his heroes, Maltravers, he 'began to taste the transport, the intoxication of an author,' publishing an Oriental tale under the title of 'Ismael.' Doubtless when the novelist penned the following respecting Maltravers he was writing out of the fulness of his own experience:—'And oh! what a luxury is there in that first love of the Muse; that process by which we give a palpable form to the long-intangible visions which have flitted across us, the beautiful ghost of the Ideal within us, which we invoke in the Godara of our still closets with the wand of the simple pen.'

Having been prepared by private tutors he went to Cambridge, where he enjoyed the society of Alexander Cockburn, Winthorp Mackworth Praed—the idol of that set, although he never achieved great things afterwards—Charles Villiers, of Corn Law fame; Benjamin Kennedy, the Greek professor; Macaulay, Tennyson, Thackeray, Darwin, Trench, and Maurice. He joined the Union Debating Club, and appears to have created a sensation there at a time when other able men like Macaulay figured in it. He tells one good story of Whewell, who, when president of the Union received a message from the Vice-Chancellor, ordering the dispersion of one of the meetings, to which he replied:—'Strangers will please withdraw, and the House will take the message into consideration.' At Cambridge his career was not that of a hard reading man, neither was it that of an idler. In 1825 he won the Chancellor's prize for a poem on 'Sculpture,' which his friend Cockburn, even when Chief Justice, described 'as the most beautiful of all the poems of its class.' In the following year he published a volume of verse entitled 'Weeds and Wild Flowers,' and this was followed in 1827 by a tale in verse, 'O'Neill, or The Rebel,' and by his first novel, 'Falkland,' published anonymously. In 1828 appeared what was perhaps the most brilliant of all his works, 'Pelham,' the history of which is entertaining because it exhibits so exact a repetition of the fate which has befallen many books. The publisher's reader condemned it as 'utterly worthless.' But it became the 'text book about English society,' and was translated into many of the languages of Europe. One proof of its powers is with us to this day, and we refer to it as an instance of the curious origin of a change of fashion in dress. Lady Frances Pelham says in a letter to her son:—'*Apropos* of the complexion: I did not like that blue coat you wore when I last saw you. You look best in black, which is a great compliment, for people must be very distinguished in appearance to do so.' 'Tell them,' writes the present Lord Lytton, 'the coats worn for evening dress were of different colours—brown, green, or blue, according to the fancy of the wearer, and Lord Oxford tell me that the adoption of the now invariable black dates from



W. Ferrier, photo. BANK OF NEW ZEALAND, TIMARU.