## Illustrated Interviews.

## XXIX.—SIR GEORGE LEWIS.



From a Photo. by

SIR GEORGE LEWIS.

[Elliott & Fry.



Γ was altogether an experience as remarkable as it was interesting — and yet there was something delightfully humorous about it, apart from the serious side of

listening to the story of a successful man's career. A journalistic cross-examination of Sir George Lewis! A pleasantly severe questioning of a man who somebody has declared knows enough to hang half-a-dozen of the biggest men in the City! A talk—a long talk—with the greatest lawyer of modern times, whose legal methods are so convincing and whose personality is so impressive that a sudden glance from his eye has made many an opposing witness wince, whilst a solicitorial smile, such as only "George Lewis" can assume, has won him all he wanted from a stubbornly inclined jury.

Í have had the privilege of meeting Sir \*Vol vi-83.

George amidst surroundings of a distinctly different character—at his charming little cottage at Walton-on-Thames, at his house in Portland Place, and in his private room at his business abode in Ely Place. But Sir George Lewis is always the same—a kindly, genial man, whose very appearance wins your immediate confidence. He is of medium height, strongly built, with white hair and whiskers. He is deliberate in every action and every word, and at once impresses one as an individual who can take his stand and keep his footing. He has the most wonderfully penetrating eyes I have ever seen. Penetrating! He never takes them off you. I have seen Sir George take in the beauties of a Burne-Jones with one eye, and with the other look at you! He loves work—it is his recreation. He always appears to be thinking, and yet he assures you he does not know what it is to have a night's rest disturbed, and can welcome



From a Photo. by]

ASHLEY COTTAGE

Morpheus with a murder on his mind as readily as with the knowledge that a wellearned cheque of substantial value has just been added to his balance at the bank.

I paid just a hurried visit to Ashley Cottage. We talked of many things in the railway carriage whilst I joined the man of many secrets in his only vice—a good cigar. He would have a Court of Appeal for criminal casesthough he does not believe that many men are hanged unless they deserved their fate. But circumstantial evidence plays a prominent part nowadays in all causes célèbres-

and particularly in poisoning cases. It calls for a tribunal where the severest of evidence sifting may be made. He is a great advocate for enlarging the powers of the Divorce Court, and asks, and justly so, that the wife of a man convicted and sentenced to a term of three years' and upwards imprisonment should be

"Fancy," said Sir George, "a young girl just mar[Elliott & Fry.

for which the sentence is a life one. Don't you think it monstrous that the woman should not be allowed to marry again? would go farther. If a man deserts his wife for three years and upwards, she, too, should be free!" All these topics

ried; her husband commits a crime

were enlarged upon until the train pulled up at Walton. We left the carriage.

"It was on this very platform," said Sir George, "that I asked Parnell an

important question. Parnell was a man of a most secretive, suspicious, and distrustful disposition. He trusted few, though let me at once acknowledge him as a man of immense power, possessing the mind of a statesman, and indeed a very great Irishman. In my early associations with him, he one night followed me to Ashley Cottage. long conversation, I drove him to the railway station, in order that he might catch the last train; and, noticing his anxiety—it was on this very spot-and wishing to gain his confidence, I put out my hand and said to him:—



"'I should like you to give me your entire confidence—you may trust me as you would your brother.'

"We shook hands earnestly, but somehow I do not think I thoroughly gained from him what I wanted at that moment. It was not until after many months that I felt sure of his complete trust. I think he trusted me when he would nobody else, and at one time I was the

only person who could communicate with him."

So we reached the cottage.

It is the most picturesque little habitation imaginable, with its old-time casement windows, round which the roses creep and jasmine climbs. In the summer the front is almost hidden from view by a gigantic chestnut tree, but autumn has both robbed and beautified the place in its surroundings. The trees and shrubs are gloriously coloured by Nature's hand, and the chestnut has shed



From a Photo. by

THE POND, ASHLEY COTTAGE.

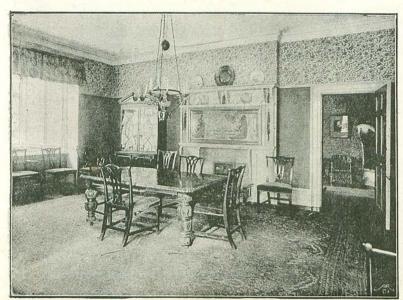
(Elliott & Fry.

its leaves, which now lie in a golden circle round the trunk. The leaves are shaken down upon us by the breeze as we enter the house.

The interior is in every way cosy and convenient, and is an ideal cottage. Pictures of German celebrities are in the hall, out of which abuts the dining-room, with its fine Chippendale furniture, its quaint—though artistic—fireplace and typical cottage brass fender, while, let in over the marble mantelboard, is a grand example of Burne-Jones.

It has its own romantic little corner—a cushioned recess near the window draped in blue and white, from which you may catch sight of an old tree trunk, which serves as a capital table for many al fresco five o'clock teas in the days of summer.

The drawing-room—diminutive and dainty, with its blue china knick-knacks—contains many examples of Burne-Jones, whilst over the fireplace is a clever pencil portrait of Lady



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THE DINING-ROOM, ASHLEY COTTAGE.

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THE DRAWING-ROOM, ASHLEY COTTAGE.

[Elliott & Fry.

A fine old grandfather's clock ticks with the most approved-of regularity in the garden hall—in which hang several engravings after Sir Frederick Leighton and Samuel Cousins-and we walk once more into the open, down a gravel path an eighth of a mile long and lined with rose-bushes, until the old

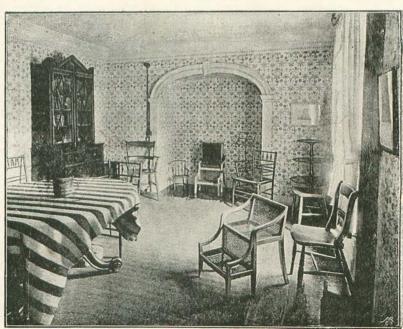
sundial at the bottom of the garden is reached, near which is a seat - the favourite restingplace of the family during the days of sunshine.

Returning to the cottage once again, I peeped into the schoolroom. It is one of the most interesting corners in the house. All Sir George's children are now grown up, but the schoolroom remains as it was in their early years, and is frequented more by those who once

learnt there than any room in Ashlev Cottage. You can almost see the tiny scholars in their little chairs - for the chairs are religiously kept; the birds' eggs are allotted their own particular corner. and the book-case contains the school books, much thumbed through constant use.

The rose-bushes and jasmine, the crimson autumnal tints, and the golden shedding of the chestnut treewere still before me when, on the following morning, I hurried away to

Portland Place, from whence I was to accompany Sir George to a corner of Holborn, which will always be associated with his name. His house is the home of a man of true artistic instincts. Sir George runs in a very delightful channel. He will have the work of our most eminent-



From a Photo, bul

THE SCHOOLROOM, ASHLEY COTTAGE.

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artists, and their brushes are employed to chronicle the features of the children of the great lawyer.

We are in the dining-room. There is its magnificent ceiling, designed by Champneys and executed by Frampton, to be admired; a grand old German cabinet, the wonderful bolts and bars of which are shown to me, whilst Richmond's and Lehman's portraiture of Sir George and Lady Lewis respectively are examples not

to be passed by. But beyond all these Sir George points out a portrait of his second daughter-painted when quite young-by Burne-Jones over the mantel-board. so I found it in all the rooms of the house - pictures of his wife and his children are given the place of honour everywhere.

We watch Sir George's youngest daughter



From a Photo. by]

THE DINING-ROOM, PORTLAND PLACE.

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ride away on "Molly," the pony, and he

remarks as he waves a "good-bye":—
"Excellent exercise, riding, eh? Though I never rode a horse in my life!" and we glance at the fine etchings and engravings which line the staircase, peep into Miss Lewis's room and take a rapid glance at her collection of photos, drawings by Alma Tadema, Du Maurier, etc., and the glorious

little bits of sky painted by Miss Tadema and framed in gold. Lady Lewis joinsus in our house trip, and I learn that she is a most enthusiastic collector of first editions, and has volumes that would positively make a Quaritch envious, not only of books published in this country, but of foreign authors of eminence as well.

The music-room leads out from the drawing-room, and it follows-although I noticed many Whistlers in this apartment—that a.



From a Photo. by]

MISS LEWIS'S ROOM.

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From a Photo. by]

THE MUSIC-ROOM, PORTLAND PLACE.

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head of Paderewski, by Burne Jones (which, by-the-bye, the great pianist thinks is the best ever done of him) and a very early portrait of Beethoven find a fitting place in this spot devoted to the Muses.

It is probable that no professional man has received so many gifts from his clients as Sir George Lewis. So great is Sir George's opinion as to honourable secrecy in all matters between solicitor and client, that in

some cases he alone knows the donor of many a magnificent gift as a token of help rendered at a critical moment. I saw some of these gifts in the drawing-room — though there is a cellar packed with them below. They are of the greatest value and most exquisite workmanship—grand vases, snuff-boxes, Oriental daggers, cigarcases, silver - gilt cabinets, and many more. It is a beautiful apartment in which these tokens of a

than that formed by the marble mantelpiece? Long, easy seats

are arranged on either side, a great log of wood is burning in an antique grate, and its glowing embers are reflected upon one of the most beautiful portraits Burne-Iones

great man's skill are set out in glass cabinets, containing family portraits of Lady Lewis, by Sergeant, near the fireplace; the daughters, by Mrs. Jopling, Alma Tadema, and Mrs. Perugini; admirable examples of Miss Tadema, Solomon and George Boughton; Italian bronzes; whilst amongst all these are freely scattered great bowls of flowers from Ashlev Cottage. But where is a more picturesque corner

ever painted.

The canvas in this frame is let in over the fireplace against a draping of red-brown plush. It is the picture of a little maiden lying at full length on a sofa, reading.



From a Photo. by]

THE DRAWING-ROOM, PORTLAND PLACE.

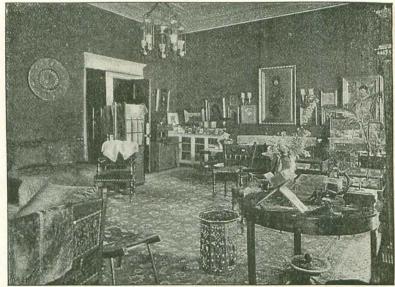
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It is very real, very brilliant. The original at the moment I saw it was enjoying a ride on "Molly's" back.

There was just time to look at two portraits of Sir George's grandfather and father, the smokingroom, which are reproduced in these pages, and together with the pictures of the eminent solicitor himself and Mr. George Lewis, the eldest son and heir to the business, give four generations of the

Lewis family; and we were on our way to Ely Place, Holborn.

Ely Place has quite a little history of its own. So I learnt from Sir George, as we drove through the gates, which are shut every night at nine o'clock. It is a very old bit of London, and is governed by a separate Act of Parliament. It is the only place in the Metropolis where the old-time custom of crying out the hours of the night by the porter is still kept up, and Sir George considers it one of the best guarded spots in London. It would require a more than



From a Photo. by]

THE DRAWING-ROOM, PORTLAND PLACE.

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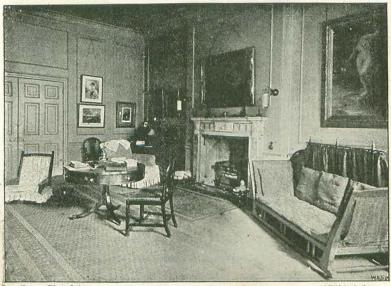
average enterprising cracksman to successfully ply his jemmy and drills upon the bars and bolts of the door which leads to the strong room at Ely Place.

It was the first room I went into as soon as we arrived at the business house of the solicitor.

Whilst driving down, Sir George said:-

"One branch of my profession is that which never becomes public—that is, the secrets of London. I have not kept a diary for over twenty years! When I found that my business was becoming so confi-

dential. I determined that I would never chronicle another thing—so when I die the confidences of London society die with me. At one time I thought the fact of my not keeping a diaryfor reference sake -might lead to some severe observations in court, as all lawyers are expected to keep such a book. But a Lord Justice told me he was perfectly certain that no judge, under such peculiar circum-



From a Photo. by]

THE SMOKING-ROOM, PORTLAND PLACE.

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From a Photo. by]

ELY PLACE.

[Elliott & Fre

born at No. 10. We talk of actors being born "on the boards." I went into one room, now used as a clerks' office.

"That desk," said the solicitor, quietly, "occupies the very place where a bedstead once stood sixty years ago, and where I first saw the light!"

We visit a waiting-room on the ground floor. The long table in the centre suggests a dining-loard. True enough, it was his father's dining-room once. When the day's

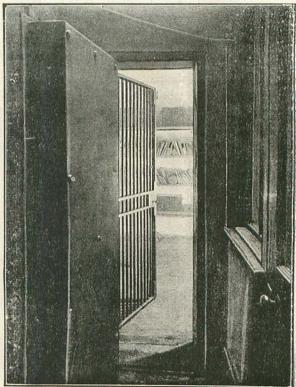
work was done, at four o'clock, the briefs and papers would be removed from the table,

stances as these, would ever blame me. Let me tell you," and Sir George spoke very calmly, without a tinge of

very calmly, without a tinge of egotism in his tone, "that no novel was ever written, no play ever produced, that has or could contain such incidents and situations as at the present moment are securely locked up in the archives of memory which no man will ever discover."

We stood in the strong room—the gas was lit. As the gate closed behind us it seemed like a prison The parcels of deeds and wills are all arranged in alphabetical order—they are all known by ciphers, no name being visible. The fronts of all the great black deed-boxes are turned to the wall with the names painted on them -no, one was not! I pointed this out happily to Sir George, and promised him not to reveal the name. He smilingly remarked that he would remedy this little oversight long before the convicting camera appeared on the scene. He did so at once.

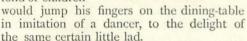
Nos. 10, 11, and 12, Ely Place, is certainly the most interesting lawyer's office in London—it has no fewer than twenty-two rooms. Sir George has spent his whole life there. All his eight brothers and sisters were



From a Photo. by] ENTRANCE TO THE STRONG ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry.

and the linen cloth laid in their place. The diningroom was the resort of all the fashionable people of the day, par-ticularly of the theatrical world-Charles Marthews. Madame Vestris, Mr. and Mrs. Kean, and other lights of that period. Many a time has the versatile Charles Matthews taken a certain little fellow on his knee and told him the merriest of stories. whilst Kean-who was particularly fond of children-



"My father knew all the celebrities," said Sir George. "Actors and"—this with a dry smile—"journalists crowded here! In those days they were always going through the Bankruptcy Court—save Kean: he never did."



From a Photo, by

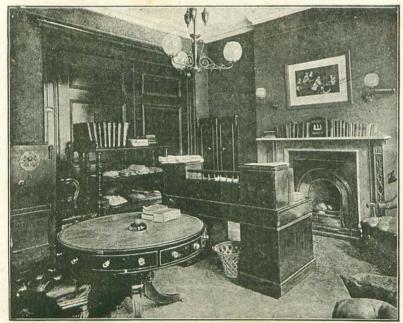
THE STRONG ROOM.

[Elliott & Fry

I reminded Sir George of what he did not tell me, and that was that his father was known as "The Poor Man's Lawyer," and not only were the big people welcome at his house, but men without means were at liberty to go also, knowing that they would not only be heard but frequently defended at the sessions without being required to pay a

> single farthing to their professional adviser. I knew, too, that such acts as these have become hereditary.

We sat down together in the private room. There is positively nothing in it calculated to satisfy one's curiosity. The desk which Sir George uses is of substantial mahogany; there are a number of legal volumes seldom consulted. however—in the bookcases; the furniture is that of the ordinary library pattern, upholstered in a



From a Photo, by] Vol. vi. -84.

SIR GEORGE LEWIS'S PRIVATE ROOM

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dark sage green; a round Chippendale table comes in useful for five o'clock tea, and a single picture of the judges engaged in the Parnell Commission hangs over the mantelpiece.

I heard the story of how Sir George has worked his way and established his right to be regarded as the first lawyer in the land. He tells you at the outset that he has always been a working man, and recommends that method-work, steady, persistent, and always with a motive, as the best guide a young man can have to success. Having attained it, the solicitor never for a moment gives one the impression that he wants to All is told very quietly, talk about it. deliberately, and apparently always with the thought before him as to whether a word from his lips shall injure a man, be he friend or client.

George Lewis was born on the 21st April, 1833, and is the son of James Graham Lewis, the founder of the firm. His first school was at Edmonton, where amongst his schoolfellows he had Henry Raphael—one of the leading bankers in London. His first governess is alive now—Miss Parry, who was head of Queen's College, Harley Street. Miss Parry little thought as she taught young Lewis the rudiments of arithmetic that the small pupil was to be the executor to her will. Still such is the case. Whilst at Edmonton, with that admirable tact which in after years was to become his leading characteristic, the scholar always contrived to get out of every scrape which

fell to his lot. In speaking of the days at Edmonton—where, bythe-bye, he held his own at cricket and all sports of the meadow—Sir George said:—

"Remember, I am speaking of the time when it was forbidden for a Jew to go to college. This then existing prejudice was so strong that the boys felt it as severely as their fathers and mothers. I am one of those who have least suf-

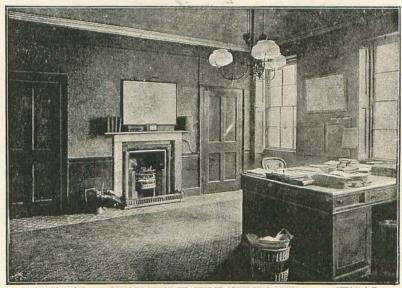
fered from any prejudice. I associate with all creeds to-day, and recognise no difference. I remained at Edmonton till I was thirteen or fourteen, when I went to University College, Gower Street, until I was seventeen and a half, when I was brought here and articled to my father. I served my five years, and was admitted as a solicitor in Hilary, 1856.

"During my articled period, for some two or three years I had great experience in attending the courts as an advocate in small cases, and there was born the love—which, let me assure you, I have not lost yet—for advocacy work, though during the last fifteen or twenty years I have not acted as an advocate, save on special occasions—for a newspaper libel or people of position."

"What was your first case, Sir George?"

I asked.

"It occurred during the absence of my father. I was about nineteen at the time. A hansom drove up here, and a woman rushed into the office in a terrible state of mind. She told me that her son was in custody at Westminster Police-court, on a charge of robbing a till in a public-house. I rushed away with her in the cab, fought the case, and won it; though I will admit to you that whilst Is was questioning the witnesses I didn't know whether I was on my head or The mother was a very big, muscular woman, and waited for me outside. I was made very happy by the words which accompanied her little-too-enthusiastic smack on the back: 'Well done, young 'un!' But her enthusiasm hurt."



From a Photo. by

ROOM IN WHICH SIR GEORGE LEWIS WAS BORN.

[Elliott & Fry.

At the termination of his articles he went into partnership with his father and uncle.

"My first really important client," continued Sir George, "was that of Lloyds' Salvage Association. This was an association to protect the underwriters from fraud. I prosecuted for them for many years, one of the principal of which was a big case connected with the scuttling of a ship. It was heard before Justice Blackburn, and those employed in the prosecution were Sir J. B. Karslake, M.P., Mr. Hardinge Giffard, Q.C.late Lord Chancellor - Montagu Williams, and myself. It was a neat little fraud. A ship was chartered, subsequently scuttled, and a claim made for £30,000 insurance on the ship and the cases of arms the vessel contained. The cases in question were filled with £3 worth of salt! All the prisoners got long terms of penal servitude.

"I prepared and carried out many cases for Lloyds', and in 1869 the big prosecution of the directors of Overend and Gurney's Bank took place. I conducted the prosecution at the police-court, but retired before the

trial."

Sir George prosecuted in a number of bank failures, the result of the Joint Stock Act of 1862. In addition to Overend and Gurney's, there were Barnett's Bank of Liverpool, the Unity Bank, the Merchant's Bank, etc. Everybody was talking about "George Lewis," and there was scarcely a criminal case without his name being associated with

"There was the Balham mystery," said Sir George, as he remembered some of these "sensations." "I represented the family of the late Mr. Bravo; Sir Henry James, Mrs. Bravo; Serjeant Parry, Dr. Gully; while Mr. Murphy was for Mrs. Cox. A verdict had been obtained that Mr. Bravo had committed suicide and not been poisoned, but the friends of Mr. Bravo not being satisfied, the Court of Queen's Bench did a most unusual thing and ordered a fresh inquest. The jury found a new verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons

"Now, listen. It is much to be regretted that at an inquest the advocate is not allowed to make a speech to the jury. been able to do so, I could and should at once have relieved both Dr. Gully and Mrs. Bravo from any suggestion that they in any way participated in the crime. You are at liberty to say-and I am publicly expressing this for the first time—that I then and still do believe them-Not Guilty!"

"Then who poisoned Mr. Bravo?" I exclaimed.

"Who?" repeated Sir George-and he told me the name.

Madame Rachel, of "Beautiful for ever" fame, was not forgotten. Rachel-who was very far from beautiful herself-used to trade upon the weaknesses of ladies and their fear of publicity. She said the water she used came from the River Jordan. Both her story and the aqua pura were only very highly coloured. Sir George Lewis prosecuted her on two occasions, and she died in prison whilst serving her second term of five years.

I asked the solicitor what was the smartest robbery he had ever met with in his ex-

perience.

"Well," he answered, "the Hatton Garden diamond robbery was certainly one of the most ingenious. I acted for the Alliance Marine Insurance Company, but possibly the smartest of modern times was the famous gold robbery. I will tell it in a few words. Some boxes of bar gold were in transit from London to Paris. The boxes were weighed at London Bridge, put into the locker in the guard's van, and locked up. The packages were weighed again at Dover, again at Calais, a fourth time at the station at Paris, and the weight was found to be exactly correct to the turn of a scale. When the boxes were delivered to the owners in Paris and were opened, they contained nothing but-

"The guard was in the robbery. False keys were obtained, and, during the transit from London, confederates got into the guard's van, filled the boxes with shot to the exact weight, got out at Dover, took tickets back to town, and the men were in London with the gold before the boxes were opened in Paris! The robbery remained undiscovered for two years, when one of the men turned Queen's evidence. The guard and his accomplices were tried and convicted."

Sir George Lewis has been associated with all the important newspaper libel cases of modern times, and has acted for all the principal dailies and other periodicals. "It was over a newspaper libel case that Sir Charles Russell had his first brief from me," said Sir George. "It was a case of Mr. Labouchere's and here let me tell you that all Mr. Labouchere's libels have been connected with cases for the public good. No litigant has been more successful than he, except that he has been left to pay some £20,000 in costs!

"It w s a libel brought by Mr. Robertson,

of the Aquarium, and Sir Charles won



SIR GEORGE LEWIS'S GRANDFATHER.

From a Painting.

it. He also defended Mr. Labouchere in the action which Lambri Pasha brought against him, the Napoleon of litigants having accused him of cheating at cards.

"I consider that the greatest advocate off the Bench in my day is Sir Charles Russell. By common consent he is admitted by the profession to be the strongest advocate within legal memory. I knew both Serjeant Ballantyne and Serjeant Parry when in their best days practising at the Old Bailey. Ballantyne was famous for his powers of crossexamination and Parry for his advocacy, but I question if they would be successful to-day. I have employed Sir Charles Russell in most of my heavy cases for the last twenty years, and although in the performance of his duty he is unrelenting, yet I know no kinder man at heart.

It would be quite impossible to give a detailed list of the *causes célèbres* in which the great solicitor has figured. He it was who de-

fended Mr. Lawes and Mr. Bowles against the action brought by Belt, the sculptor—that trial when nearly all the Royal Academicians were subpœnaed. He lost the case—which ran for forty-four days—for the verdict was for £5,000, and it cost Sir John Lawes £13,000 in costs, which he refused to pay, as he considered the verdict was unjust.

I thought I caught the slightest gleam of satisfaction in Sir George's eye as he hinted that twelve months afterwards he prosecuted Belt for Sir William Abdy for obtaining money under false pretences, gained a conviction, with twelve months' hard labour, and Belt has never been heard of since.

The Baccarat case was not forgotten, and Sir George said that perhaps what he would most remember about that case was the last impressive words of Lord Coleridge's summing up to the jury: "Gentlemen, in considering the honour of Sir William Gordon-Cumming, do not forget your own!"



From a] SIR

SIR GEORGE LEWIS'S FATHER.

[Painting

But Sir George Lewis's greatest triumph of all was the Parnell Commission.

"Mr. Parnell," said Sir George, "was an entire stranger to me until the day when Lord Salisbury's Government said they would grant a Commission, when he called on me. He asked me if I would represent him and the other Irish M.P.'s. I knew very little of Irish politics, and I told Parnell that I would give him my assistance on one conditionthat he would give me his word of honour that he would come to me, at all times, when I wanted him. He gave me his word, and faithfully kept it.

"It was the greatest case I have ever had in my life. It lasted fifteen months, involved the honour of sixty-five members of Parliament, and in addition the word of Parnellthat he had never written the facsimile letter published by the Times. After I had received various documents I came to the conclusion that they were forgeries-and by Piggott. You are sitting in the very chair he occupied when I interviewed him here-my other two interviews with him were at Mr. Labouchere's and Anderton's Hotel. During the first six months of that inquiry I had to sit with the secret that I knew who was guilty, and unable to tell a soul. When Piggott—and a greater scoundrel I never met-was put in the box, I soon relieved myself of it."

It was Sir George Lewis who found the real forgery out. The story as to how it was

discovered is now a matter of history, but it is interesting to remember that the solicitor spent nearly a whole day with his eyes fixed upon the two letters purported to have been written by Parnell.

Sir George who was knighted on the 3rd of June this year - expressed himself very tersely on a variety of subjects, particularly on the Bankruptcy Act, which, although it has taken all the bankruptcy prac-tice out of solicitors' hands, still

has lessened the number of failures and taught traders a lesson of carefulness. He spoke magnificently of the Salvation Army in its work in aiding wrong-doers to a respectable level again, and said: "I know of no organization that dips so low and rescues so many out of the deepest destitution."

My long talk with Sir George Lewis ended in quite a dramatic incident. We were speaking about the robbery of Gainsborough's "Duchess of Devonshire." Mr. Agnew put this matter into Sir George Lewis's hands, and since that time much information has reached Ely Place as to its whereabouts, including even small strips of the canvas in proof of identification. nothing has occurred up to the present to enable the solicitor to get possession of the painting.

"Now," Sir George said, suddenly, "do you want to earn a thousand pounds?"

"I should be most happy."

"Then bring the stolen Duchess into my office, for I have instructions to pay that sum the moment it arrives here."

"Give me a clue, Sir George," I asked.

"Go to Antwerp," he said.
"To Antwerp?" I repeated.

"A man is now undergoing a term of penal servitude there," continued the solicitor.

"His name?"

"His name is Rayment! That is the man who stole the Duchess!"

HARRY HOW.



MR. GEORGE LEWIS.

[Elliott & Fry.