

MISS STURGE AND IRISH INDUSTRIES.

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Whether we go to Old Ireland as politicians or tourists, as seekers of the beautiful or with a desire to know more of a country and people that should be both our neighbour and our pride, Ireland abounds in interest. As an Emerald Isle, it is full of pleasant landscapes, charming sea-side resorts, and wild and weird conditions, go where one may. On an Irish car, on a bicycle or on foot, going by Belfast by steamer to scour the farming districts of Ulster; or to Londonderry direct and away by the sad and lonely rocks and bogs of Donegal, with its many grand sea views; or whether we begin south and go by the way to Bantry Bay and by Killarney; or to Dublin and along to Galway and into the wilds of Connemara, objects of study, full of human interest and natural wonders, are sure to give a rich reward. Go to Connemara; see the grand mountains; drive along the most picturesque lakes; over moors and rocky and boggy wildernesses and scattered homesteads; or come to the sea shores and inlets, where streams and fish are abundant, and we shall return with a feeling that in Ireland there ought to be by nature a happy and contented people. If that inspires us to ask why it is not so, to ask how it can become so, to feel it a duty to help to make it so, our trips will not be in vain, either to us or to our sister land. When far away from cities and in the vicinity of lovely rambles, and lakes, and inlets of the sea, we arrive at Letterfrack, we shall find a very comfortable hotel, and come to scenes of desolation and of human interest also, where one traveller, the good and earnest daughter of the late Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, came and saw and, with a self-sacrifice beyond understanding, resolved to remain and try, as far as a woman's will and skill could, to do something amongst a very poor and starving brethren to lead them into better things.

When we arrived there one night in the dark, after a few hours' drive through wind and storm, we reached Letterfrack, and found good fires in our bedrooms and good refreshments to welcome us. Outside was grim and ghostly, in the fog and rain. Next morning, our first pleasure was to have a long chat with Miss Sturge, and see her works. Some two years before she had seen the poverty of the land, and felt that if she could do any good, she had found the opening where work and food and all the joys of life were wanting to persons who were eager to deserve them. Miss Sturge thought the place offered an opening for basket making, if willows could be grown and the children taught. She went to France and had lessons in the work; she came back, and brought a helper, a Frenchman who could make baskets, and she got the use on certain days of the room used as a Justices' Court. There she got a few young children to come and work up into baskets the willows she had brought. Time went on, the children did very well, but Miss Sturge could not get a bit of land to grow her willows on, and had to go on importing them at a cost and incon-

venience as great as could be where no railways reached, where roads were few and bad, and where in winter it took many days to get carried what should now take only a few hours. Those who might have let her some four acres of boggy and rocky land for her willows, did not see how angelic her mission was, and gave her no help, but only cold-shoulder. She wished for a little land to build a workshop and a little home; land, such as it is, abounded, but not for so good a work as hers. And she worked on for two years under trials, and at times under sickness and almost a fainting heart, only borne with from the deep Christian feeling that she had been called by the Almighty to bless those children, whom she had come to teach how to make bread and some few comforts by their own work. Miss Sturge was a voice crying in the wilderness; but unless her voice could also reach to good people away from Connemara, who could buy her baskets? The little workers would have no outlet for their work. Since we saw her in September, 1890, she has got a lease of some four acres of rocky and boggy land, through, I think, the "Christian Brothers," who have a most useful industrial school there. She has built a small iron house as a workshop; and enclosing her leasehold, is putting herself a little home on it. The furniture of this home is made by the children she teaches, and consists of chairs, bedsteads, &c., made of willow and bamboo; and this teaches the children how to make furniture for their own homes, cheap and useful. Miss Sturge does work of the very best kind now by the hands of her Connemara boys and girls, and the work is very suitable for homes, for sale at bazaars, and for ornamental decorations very interesting. Miss Sturge has in this enterprise spent means and even health, but she needs encouragement from all who wish, apart from politics or sect, to mend Old Ireland. If mothers would think of her, if well-meaning ladies and friends would show her sympathy, she will still succeed in doing real good, and in some measure make further charity to a few lonely inhabitants needless. Miss Sturge has all the spirit of a good missionary woman, and hopes through fears and gloom to make a little paradise. Her unselfishness is great, her self-denial beyond praise, and the day must come when she will hear a voice saying—"Well done, good and faithful servant." Pray think, friends and readers, if you cannot send her a message, and do something to make her a market for the handiwork of her little boys and girls in the wilds of Connemara, at the Letterfrack home. We have often calls for help and sympathy, and they reach from Chile to India, from Russia to Connemara, and sometimes nearer home; but here, through Miss Sturge, by letter to Letterfrack, near Galway, by buying a few nice baskets and other useful willow-work you can do good without measure.

HENRY SWINGLEHURST.

Hincaster House, near Milnthorpe,
15th February, 1892.

❖ Fancy Baskets, ❖

SUITABLE FOR EXHIBITIONS
AND BAZAARS

FROM THE

Connemara Basket Industry

CONDUCTED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF
MISS SOPHIA STURGE.

One of the most practical attempts to deal with the extreme poverty and suffering of the native population in the wild West of Ireland is the Connemara Basket Industry, which has been established at Letterfrack, county Galway, Ireland, by the single handed and indefatigable labours of Miss Sturge, daughter of the late Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham. Miss Sturge went to France herself to learn the art of basket-making, and has, since 1888, been engaged in teaching it to the poverty-stricken peasants on the rocky Atlantic-bound coast of Connemara. Her object is to teach the rising generation a trade by which they can make a living at home instead of emigrating and leaving behind the very old and the very young. Fancy Baskets of many varieties are now being made. This work is a good attempt to help the people to help themselves.

❖ FOR SAMPLES AND PARTICULARS APPLY TO

MISS SOPHIA STURGE,

LETTERFRACK,

Co. GALWAY, IRELAND.