

## CHAPTER XXV

IT was summer redundant, and the sun was sinking in the deep blue sea. Its trailing garments, rich in crimson and saffron, scintillated on the waves that a brisk breeze gathered into folds.

From the number of people already on the quay it was evident that something of unusual interest had stirred the calm of Ballinbeg. The peasantry were dressed in their best, and jests followed by merry peals of laughter indicated that the event was not of the depressing nature that too often occasioned the massing of the people.

"Here comes *Inishfesh*," exclaimed a bystander, pointing towards a four-oared boat in the distance, "and *Loon Island* is not going to be behind in its honours. The women are more than the men, too, judged by the number of head shawls on the hooker."

"That's right," exclaimed a third; "if you want a thing done well, the women are the men to do it."

"They will have a grand breeze anyhow, and with a spring tide they ought to make the harbour by dusk."

"Indeed, then, we don't mind if it is dark, for it won't be the sunlight they'll be dependin' on for the brightness of the welcome."

"That's true; sure, Dr Mahan, the chairman of committee, has collected every tar barrel in the county, and as for turf and bogdale, they've stripped Longford parish."

"The devil a penny that will cost, either; sure, they had to stop the people from bringin' it, and there were