

The Lady Ursula

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North American

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In 1690, a stately house stood in Kittery, Maine, a strongly guarded place with moat and drawbridge (which was raised at night) and a moated grange adjacent where were cattle, sheep, and horses. Here, in lonely dignity, lived Lady Ursula, daughter of the lord of Grondale Abbey, across the water, whose distant grandeurs were in some sort reflected in this manor of the wilderness. Silver, mahogany, paintings, tapestries, waxed floors, and carven chests of linen represented wealth; prayers were said by a chaplain every morning and evening in the chapel, and, though the main hall would accommodate five hundred people, the lady usually sat at meat there with her thirty servants, her part of the table being raised two feet above theirs.

It was her happiness to believe that Captain Fowler, now absent in conflict with the French, would return and wed her according to his promise, but one day came a tattered messenger with bitter news of the captain's death. She made no talk of her grief, and, while her face was pale and step no longer light, she continued in the work that custom exacted from women of that time: help for the sick, alms for the poor, teaching for the ignorant, religion for the savage. Great was her joy, then, when a ship came from England bringing a letter from Captain Fowler himself, refuting the rumor of defeat and telling of his coming. Now the hall took on new life, reflecting the pleasure of its mistress; color came back to her cheek and sparkle to her eye, and she could only control her impatience by more active work and more aggressive charities. The day was near at hand for the arrival of her lover, when Ursula and her servants were set upon by Indians, while away from the protection of the manor, and slain. They were buried where they fell, and Captain Fowler found none to whom his love or sorrow could be told.

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