

**A MINISTER OF
GRACE**

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A minister of grace by Margaret Widdemer

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MARGARET WIDDEMER

**A MINISTER OF
GRACE**

A Minister of Grace

BY MARGARET WIDDEMER

AUTHOR OF

"I've Married Marjorie," "Why Not?" "The
Wishing-Ring Man," "You're
Only Young Once," etc.



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To

DR. AND MRS. CHARLES HOLLAND KIDDER

In Memory of Long Friendship

A MINISTER OF GRACE

OF THE CLAN OF GOD

"I WOULDN'T do it, Marion," said Andrew Blanton meditatively.

"Wouldn't do what?" demanded his sister-in-law. She was the sister of his young wife, long dead even in those days, when Marion's son Arden was a child. But people who had even a shadow of relationship to Dr. Blanton were apt to cling to it.

He eyed her, unafraid; which was an achievement, for stately Mrs. Garrison possessed a combination of quick charm, humor and conviction which made her able to override most people and things. She was not in the least conscious of it, be it said; and, being religious as passionately as she was everything else, overrode for good generally.

"I wouldn't make Arden into a clergyman until he was—let me see—at least fifteen. According to the best medieval authorities, indeed, which believed, as did all the intelligentsia of the Middle Ages, in beginning the business of life at adolescence, sixteen was the usual age—"

She interrupted him with a quick mingling of laughter and petulance, if a woman of her swift dignity could be called petulant.

"Oh, you're laughing at me, with your rounded periods. Of course when you get to the Middle Ages

there's nothing we poor clergywomen can say back. I had an education once, but Ladies' Aid Societies—besides, it's what the child really wants. I think it would have been, even if I hadn't given him to God before he was born. I haven't influenced him. He know's I'd be glad, of course. But he's only twelve. If he turns to any other profession I—we—would let him go willingly. I can't honestly say gladly."

"I wonder," said Andrew Blanton, with his little laugh, looking at her affectionately over his spectacles, "how many things even the best of women can say honestly?"

"I speak my mind," said Mrs. Garrison, "a good deal more than I should in my position, I'm afraid."

"I know—I know!" said Andrew Blanton, with an affectation of humorous apprehension. "To me, sometimes, my dear Marion. But be merciful to-day to an elderly gentleman, and content with, what I am told, was a signal victory over the Senior Warden's wife, who wanted to send her Mary to a French convent for the social affiliations—"

"She had no right to. What Roman Catholic would put her daughter in a Protestant finishing school for the social affiliations, as you call them? But I only reasoned with her till she saw it."

"You don't know how much you can do with people, do you, Marion? I often wonder," he went on, furtively opening a volume by a new writer—it was a Chesterton which he had borrowed of her husband—and peeping in, "why I am so uncowed. I often stay

here for days together. Yet I may say," he ended in triumph, "that except in matters of the flesh, such as coming to meals on time, I have never submitted my conscience to you once!"

"I hope no one ever has! But wasn't I right about the convent?"

"Of course you were. And you hypnotized Mrs. Greening into momentary nobility of character. Much better than none," said Dr. Blanton sincerely. "But as for your small boy, you began with the assumption that God wanted him for one of His ministers before he was born. He's not really had his chance to escape. . . . Surely you have heard the story, my dear Marion, of the young man who was so certain that he had a call to preach—but to whom his Bishop had to explain that it must have been some other noise he heard?"

"If it is God's will, he'll grow up to be a clergyman. If it isn't, he won't. It's the best and noblest profession in the world," said his mother earnestly, smoothing down the black silk which only her regal slenderness kept from overt shabbiness. She was a genuinely high-minded woman, for as her father and grandfather before her had been clergymen, as well as her husband and brother-in-law, she should have known exactly what she was talking about; and from her point of view she did. She would have said, if you asked her, that she counted worldly prosperity a very small thing compared to the privilege of preaching Christ and him crucified. But she knew nothing