

AUGUST FIRST

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August First by Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews & Roy Irving Murray

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MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS & ROY IRVING MURRAY

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Doubleday

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BY

MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS

AND

ROY IRVING MURRAY

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. I. KELLER

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1915

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“**W**HEE!”

The long fingers pulled at the clerical collar as if they might tear it away. The alert figure swung across the room to the one window not wide open and the man pushed up the three inches possible. “Whee!” he brought out again, boyishly, and thrust away the dusty vines that hung against the opening from the stone walls of the parish house close by. He gasped; looked about as if in desperate need of relief; struck back the damp hair from his face. The heat was insufferable. In the west black-gray clouds rolled up like blankets, shutting out heaven and air; low thunder growled; at five o'clock of a

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midsummer afternoon it was almost dark; a storm was coming fast, and coolness would come with it, but in the meantime it was hard for a man who felt heat intensely just to get breath. His eyes stared at the open door of the room, down the corridor which led to the room, which turned and led by another open door to the street.

“If they’re coming, why don’t they come and get it over?” he murmured to himself; he was stifling—it was actual suffering.

He was troubled to-day, beyond this affliction of heat. He was the new curate of St. Andrew’s, Geoffrey McBirney, only two months in the place—only two months, and here was the rector gone off for his summer vacation and McBirney left at the helm of the great city parish. Moreover, before the rector was gone a half-hour, here

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was the worst business of the day upon him, the hour between four and five when the rector was supposed to be found in the office, to receive any one who chose to come, for advice, for godly counsel, for "any old reason," as the man, only a few years out of college, put it to himself. He dreaded it; he dreaded it more than he did getting up into the pulpit of a Sunday and laying down the law—preaching. And he seriously wished that if any one was coming they would come now, and let him do his best, doggedly, as he meant to, and get them out of the way. Then he might go to work at things he understood. There was a funeral at seven; old Mrs. Harrow at the Home wanted to see him; and David Sterling had half promised to help him with St. Agnes's Mission School, and must be encouraged; a man in the worst tene-

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ment of the south city had raided his wife with a knife and there was trouble, physical and moral, and he must see to that; also Tommy Smith was dying at the Tuberculosis Hospital and had clung to his hands yesterday, and would not let him go—he must manage to get to little Tommy to-night. There was plenty of real work doing, so it did seem a pity to waste time waiting here for people who didn't come and who had, when they did come, only emotional troubles to air. And the heat—the unspeakable heat! “I can't stand it another second!” he burst out, aloud. “I'll die—I shall die!” He flung himself across the window-sill, with his head far out, trying to catch a breath of air that was alive.

As he stretched into the dim light, so, gasping, pulling again at the stiff collar, he was aware of a sound; he came back