

BY THE AID OF BILL JONES

BY WALTER E. GUNN

IT was Thursday afternoon in the great departmental store of Crandal & Co., and the tide of bargain day shopping had reached its flood. Over to the right on the ground floor, Dave Livingstone, chief of the book section, stood leaning against the side of his office door. He liked and disliked the scenes of activity before him. It was true a splendid general business was being done in the area under his special care, and the extra quantity lots of "standard authors" would melt away before this, the first week of their advertised sale, but those boasted "library sets, worth \$5.00, for \$2.39," were attracting no attention.

"I'm stuck," he mused, "four thousand of 'em, sixteen thousand volumes in all, and stock-taking only five weeks away."

He was about to turn on his heel when along came the advertising manager, William Jones, called Bill all the way down from the august floor-walkers to the most irreverent broom boys.

"Hello, Livy; you're looking out of sorts."

"Come into the office," was the reply, and then, with an imitation of indifference, "why should I worry?"

Once inside, Livingstone threw off every vestige of reserve. They were neighbors' boys and life-long friends.

"Bill," he began, "I can see trouble ahead for me."

"Oh, you've always got some dire foreboding," interjected the other, laughingly.

"I'm in dead earnest, if ever a man was."

"Don't tell me now," said Jones, continuing his banter, "wait and see how you feel in the morning."

Livingstone ignored such good-natured raillery, and went on:

"When I was in New York three weeks ago I ran across what looked like a good chance in library sets—small oak-finished

book-cases containing four well-bound volumes of classical works."

"I don't like that word 'classical,'" said Jones, becoming serious at once.

"Neither do I now—that's just what makes 'em slow. People shy at the word 'classical.' They want something 'popular' or up-to-date."

Jones was about to dismiss the whole subject with a word or two of encouragement, when Livingstone arose, closed the office door and returned to throw himself into a forward attitude of extreme confidence.

"In this store," he explained, although Jones knew it to many a man's sorrow, "it costs a department manager his job if he loads up with an unsaleable line. Each section is a store in itself and must stand alone when the profits, losses and stock sheets are made up."

"That's right," assented the ad. man, reflectively.

"Well, this morning, Mr. Crandal remarked with a glaring significance, that the new library sets had developed 'a touch of the slows'—weren't moving very fast, and at the present rate of sale would stick like barnacles."

Just then an imperative young printer's devil came, *via* the advertising branch, with "a bunch of proofs for Bill Jones." The latter made a move to go.

"I'll think it all over and see you again in the morning," he said, and then, by way of amendment, "but you'll not be here tomorrow? Well, then, I'll come up to-night."

II.

When he arrived at Livingstone's home about eight in the evening, it was with an accompaniment of mental notes on alternative plans for a brisk clearance of the library sets. Cigarettes were lighted, a few