

entered. He appeared to suffer from the same nervous malady that the criminologist was manifesting. Without a word he placed a book on the counter and received another from the dealer. Clutching it tightly, he hurried out.

Monsieur Doriet opened the book which had been returned and took two one-thousand-franc notes from between the pages. He placed them in his pocket, and gave the Englishman a keen glance.

"You have found what you look for?" he asked.

"Not yet, monsieur—but the price I am prepared to pay is two thousand francs."

"Ah, that is of interest. I comprehend. What was the name of the friend who recommended me to you?"

"His name? My memory is poor. I think——"

"A moment!"

The door opened again, and Dixon Hawke had difficulty in controlling himself when he saw the bearded professor of the previous day. Limping into the shop, the man began to peer short-sightedly at a shelf of Greek classics. He muttered to himself as he pulled out first one book and then another.

Once again the criminologist found something familiar in the appearance of the stranger. He frowned and reached for his wallet.

"I will make the purchase!" he said loudly. "Here is the money!"

"Bon," grunted Monsieur Doriet.

He took a book from under the counter, and paused to scribble something on a piece of paper, which he slipped inside the cover. He gave a slight bow as he handed the book to Hawke.

"Make certain," he said, "that the receipt is right!" There was a peculiar look on his face, like the beginning of a smile.

With a swift glance at the professor, whose back was turned, Hawke opened his purchase and read the paper. What he saw there gave him the greatest shock of his life:

"Hawke! You are covered from behind the curtain! Ask to see my special editions, or a bullet will crash into your skull!"

He closed the book carefully. Even at that moment the criminologist was calm. He knew, as he had suspected the previous day, that he had found the headquarters of the dope-peddlars—that Paul Doriet carried on another business besides bookselling.

And he was recognised. Trapped by men who would not hesitate to kill if he failed to obey the command. The people who passed in the street beyond the window might have been a hundred miles away for all the help they could give him.

He looked again at the bearded professor. Was this man the spy of the organisation? By his actions he seemed to be, and yet—— Hawke let the book fall and bent to pick it up, managing to slide the slip of paper to the floor alongside the counter as he did so.

"Can I see your special editions?" he asked the bookseller quietly.

"The room behind the curtain," Doriet said. "I will be with you—later!"

The Secret of the Books.

THE criminologist straightened his shoulders as he walked to the curtain and parted it. On the other side was a door, but it opened silently before he could touch it. He walked into a room which was quite dark.

When the door closed, a light snapped on. Opposite Hawke stood two men armed with automatics. They were small and wolfish, the true apache type. They showed their teeth in ugly smiles as they searched their prisoner and removed his revolver.

One of them bent down and opened a trap in the floor. There was a flight of steps below, and a single electric light showed the rough walls of a windowless cellar.

"Go down!" growled the man, nudging Hawke.

Three other men appeared as Hawke reached the bottom of the steps, and there was some laughter as they escorted him, with mock ceremony, to a rickety chair.

"Make yourself comfortable! The chief will be here soon!"

"An unexpected welcome!" the criminologist said calmly.

"We know how to deal with your kind!" growled a fellow, whose straggling hair and pale face gave him a sinister appearance. "Bah! You are all fools, you detectives. Another fish for the Seine!"

He took a knife from his pocket, jerking open a keen blade and rubbing his thumb lightly over the edge. When he laughed, he showed a row of broken teeth.

Another man gripped his arm.

"Not yet, Francois, not yet! The chief said——"

"Bah! Why wait for him? The job has to be done!"

"But not until I give the order, Francois!"

The voice came from the top of the steps, and a moment later Monsieur Doriet descended into the cellar. He rubbed his hands together and chuckled as he looked at the prisoner.

"That troublesome professor has gone at last," he said. "The fool would arrive at such a time as this. And even then he bought nothing, claiming that fifteen francs was too much to pay for a Greek lexicon!"

"It must be a trying life to sell books!" Hawke remarked evenly.

"Don't try to be funny, my friend! Sometimes I wish you police had a few brains to make matters more interesting. Do you think we didn't see you yesterday? Do you think we did not know you had arrived in Paris? And you are the very smart super-sleuth!"

He began to laugh, but abruptly stopped, and his face became distorted with rage. Leaning forward, he pointed a trembling finger at the criminologist.

"Yet you have caused me more trouble than all the police in Paris!" he said. "A few hours here and you find our headquarters! And almost you had me tricked, too, so that I sold you the evidence that would have proved our undoing."

"It was a smart idea," Hawke drawled. "Packets of dope hidden in the covers of old books. Your victims merely had to pay the price, and received a supply of soul-destroying drug. You are clever, Monsieur Doriet, and it is a pity you turned to such a form of crime—the ugliest of all!"

The bookseller snarled and made a signal to his men. They closed in so rapidly on the Englishman that he had little chance to defend himself. They forced him back into the chair, with arms twisted to breaking point. One man pulled his head back, and Francois advanced with the knife.

In the Nick of Time.

THERE was a faint flush on Francois' pale face as he waved the blade before his victim's eyes. He laughed shrilly.

"The way to kill pigs is to slit their throats! But this pig goes into the river afterwards!"

Hawke tried to check a shudder. He was beginning to realise that Dumoulin had been right in objecting to his lone investigations. All that had happened was that he was to provide another mystery for his friend.

Unless——

The keen blade was flashing at his throat, when the shrill blast of a whistle echoed from upstairs. There was a tremendous crash and the thud of many feet moving over the floor of the shop.

A familiar voice came faintly from the distance:

"Awke, mon vieux!"

"The police!" hissed Monsieur Doriet.

"Sacré bleu!" exclaimed the apache Francois. "But at least there is time for this one to die!"

He whirled on Hawke, but already