

fluence of evil companions; he just hadn't had a fighting chance.

Born in Frankfort-on Main in 1908, Weidman in his youth had received from his parents all the advantages of a good education and a Catholic upbringing. As a lad of 19 he came to Canada, worked on farms in Saskatchewan and fell into conflict with the law. After serving a sentence of one year's imprisonment for a grain theft, Weidman was deported to his homeland where he was presently in trouble again. In 1931 he was arrested for an armed attack and sentenced to prison for five years. It was Weidman's claim that once he had gained his freedom he had gone to France with the firm intention of starting up a legitimate business—i.e., in partnership with a certain Jean Blanc, a former prison buddy, he had hoped to open a beauty parlor. Somehow—largely from having fallen into bad company, in the person of Roger Million, another ex-convict acquaintance—he had been rudely “torn away” from his good intentions and “lured” into a criminal conspiracy. Million's idea of a lucrative business project was that they form a syndicate dedicated to the abduction and holding for ransom of persons of means. Blanc's mistress, Colette Tricot, was to be used as a decoy in the infamous venture.

According to Weidman's way of thinking, his murder of Lesobre, the estate agent, had been completely justified. At the time he, Weidman, was without employment and desperately short of money. “I took what he had, about 5,000 francs, his keys, lighter and note-book,” the murderer explained in a matter-of-fact way. “As you know, I also had his car. There was no trouble and I'm sure he felt no pain.” While showing him around the villa “Mon Plaisir”, Weidman had merely shot the agent in the back of the head.

When it came time for him to describe the killing of Jean de Koven, Weidman seemed for a moment to be gripped with remorse. He had met Miss de Koven in

a bar, taken her for a stroll and persuaded her to accompany him to his hideout “La Voulzie”. With great emphasis he declared that Jean de Koven was not immoral; it was her handbag he was after. Gathering together his loot, which amounted to 800 francs and a few travellers cheques, he had then buried the girl's body under the front doorstep of his bungalow, where it was later found by police, under a few inches of earth.

For the murder of Couffy, the chauffeur, Weidman accepted sole blame. He had engaged Couffy to drive him to Nice, en route had asked him to stop the car, shot him through the back of the neck, took 1,400 francs from his pocket, dumped the lifeless body into the roadside ditch, and returned to Paris in his victim's car. Concluding his account Weidman declared, “There is nothing more to tell, except that I feel sure that his end was swift and quite painless.”

When the syndicate learned through the newspapers that Roger Leblond, a show business performer, had come into the possession of 10,000 francs, following the signing of a radio contract, Million and Weidman approached the broker, posing as financiers interested in backing his theatrical ventures. After a conference in connection with the bogus project, Leblond was persuaded to drive the pair back to “La Voulzie”—where he was shot through the nape of the neck by Weidman, while engaged in conversation with Million. Net profit for the syndicate: 5,000 francs. The dead man was dumped into the back of his own car and it was abandoned on a street in Neuilly.

Fritz Frommer, an old prison acquaintance of Weidman's had at least received a burial, though not a very decent one. His body was exhumed by police from the cellar of “La Voulzie”, the estate-execution chamber, where he had met his death quickly and unexpectedly, in much the same manner as Leblond. This one had proven a bitter disappointment pro-