CHAPTER FOUR

The Disappearance of Patrick O’Connor

All that day, again, the search went on. . . . But to no purpose; for still no trace of Edwin Drood revisited the light of the sun.

—The Mystery of Edwin Drood

For a time Marie maintained her odd triangle with Patrick and Fred. Neither man was an Adonis. It might almost appear that she had chosen her men by the oddness of their jaws. Patrick had a caricature of a face that defied exaggeration by the police court artists. He was a tall, thick-set man with a long nose bent downward toward the tip as if to call attention unnecessarily to an enormous angular jaw that projected as dramatically as Dick Tracy’s. Fred’s face was plump and weak, and his large, formless chin seemed to have grown out of the soft planes of his cheeks.

The Mannings drifted from Taunton to London in early 1849. Huish claims that Sergeant Langley and Inspector Field, after several weeks’ pursuit, traced them at last to O’Connor’s residence at 21 Greenwood Street in Mile End Road, the easterly extension of Whitechapel Road, which runs through Jack the Ripper’s famed district. The officers acquainted the Mannings with the object of their call and requested permission to search the apartment; they were presumably looking for the missing loot of the up-train. Huish writes that Mrs. Manning “immediately exclaimed with all the pride of conscious innocence, ‘Oh! by all means, here are our boxes—you are at perfect liberty to examine all we have.’ But nothing incriminating could be found.”

The gossip according to Huish tells us that the Mannings stayed on briefly with O’Connor, and Huish adds censoriously
that had Fred "been in the slightest degree sensitive to the fame and reputation of his wife, his penetration must have been of the most obtuse character not to have perceived the very questionable relation in which she lived with O'Connor." Eventually, says Huish, the ménage à trois became too much even for Fred to bear, and he left O'Connor's place to live with his brother in Newington. The *Times* account treats Patrick more kindly, reporting that the Mannings' first London residence was with Fred's brother, and that Marie took flight again and was tracked down by her angry husband at O'Connor's lodgings. In any event, the couple's differences were patched up again, and Fred and Marie were soon back together as proprietors of the old King John's Head, in Kingsland Road, a pub tied to the Goding's brewery. Still there were troubling shapes of things to come. Manning had to deposit some shares and scrip (bearer securities) as collateral for his account with Goding's. Huish asserts that Marie paid a visit to the brewery, made an unsuccessful attempt to reclaim the securities, and, having failed in her mission, "became highly excited and left the premises in a violent passion."

The Mannings' tenure at the King John's Head was brief, and they eventually took lodgings at No. 3 Minver Place, in Bermondsey. Manning apparently now had no regular occupation, and Marie's effort to establish business as a dressmaker did not meet with any success. Their relationship with O'Connor followed its unstable course. Patrick had apparently promised to sublease a portion of the Minver Place villa, and when he changed his mind, Manning filed suit against him. Somehow that controversy was smoothed away, and Patrick was often a guest at the apartment he had refused to rent. The Mannings were also seen at O'Connor's place. Marie frequently went there alone.

Patrick continued his twin occupations as gauger at the Customs House and usurer. He was very regular in his attention to both his professions. Therefore, it occasioned some surprise to O'Connor's cousin and fellow customs officer, William Flynn, when on Friday 10 August 1849, Patrick did not report for duty at the London Docks at the usual morning hour.
Minver Place, from Huish’s *The Progress of Crime*.
He did not turn up at all that day or on Saturday, and Flynn and other friends and relatives of O'Connor became uneasy. On Saturday morning Flynn went to O'Connor's lodgings to inquire whether anything had been heard of him; and two friends of O'Connor from the customs service, William Patrick Keating and David Graham, called at the same time. Keating and Graham told Flynn that they had last seen O'Connor when they met him by chance as he was walking south on London Bridge at about a quarter to five Thursday afternoon. Patrick had shown Graham a letter signed "Marie" inviting him to dinner. After Flynn had absorbed this mysterious news, the three men questioned O'Connor's landlady. She was able to tell them only that Mrs. Manning had been at O'Connor's apartment on both Thursday and Friday evenings while he was away. Their worries now confirmed, Flynn and the two friends proceeded to the police station at Arbour Square in the Stepney district, about a half mile south of Mile End Road. After explaining the circumstances Flynn asked the inspector in charge of the station to permit an officer in plain clothes to accompany him to the Mannings'. Constable Barnes was selected and, meeting Flynn by appointment the same afternoon, went with him to 3 Minver Place. They knocked on the door several times, received no answer, and went away.

Keating had better luck than Flynn. He called at Minver Place with Graham on Sunday and found Mrs. Manning home. She sat outside the front of the house with her back to the window and seemed "rather slovenly in her dress." When Keating asked for Mr. Manning, Marie said he was away. He then inquired after O'Connor, saying "Why, did he not dine here on Thursday?" She answered shortly, "He did not." It struck Keating as strange that she appeared to show no anxiety about her friend.

He questioned her about her visit to O'Connor's lodgings on Thursday, and she informed him that she had gone there that evening and had also called on Friday, to "inquire for his health." When Keating suggested that Mr. Manning might know something of O'Connor, she told him that her husband was at church. To his parting statement that he would come
again in the evening, she said: “No, we are invited out to tea, and I am afraid we shall be from home.” As they left, Keating remarked to Graham that Mrs. Manning was very nervous.

Meanwhile Flynn, despite the temporary check he had received, thought it would be appropriate to call at the Stone’s End police station, the nearest station to Minver Place, and arrived there with Constable Barnes at five o’clock Sunday afternoon. He repeated his suspicions to the inspector in charge and requested that a special watch be placed on the Mannings’ house. Flynn thought that his request was granted, but when he called again at the station on Monday morning, another inspector to whom he was introduced could give him no guarantee that the house was in fact under watch; he assured Flynn that prompt measures would be taken to make certain that nothing was removed from the house.

At Flynn’s request a constable named Wright was directed to accompany him in a new call on 3 Minver Place. This time the door opened to their knocking and the two men were met in the doorway by Mrs. Manning. By prearrangement, Wright placed himself opposite her “in order to observe the workings of her countenance” while Flynn questioned her. After being told that Manning was not at home, Flynn came to the point: “Have you seen or heard anything of Patrick O’Connor these last few days?” No, Mrs. Manning replied, she had not seen him since Wednesday night (8 August), when he called at their house very tipsy and was seen home by his companion Mr. Walsh. She had called at his lodgings on Thursday night and was very much surprised not to find him at home. She had also heard that he was still missing on Sunday.

Flynn said that it was very strange, and Mrs. Manning remarked: “Yes, it is very strange indeed, the more so as he is a very regular man.” She added, “I understand some friends of yours met him on Thursday on London Bridge, coming in the direction of this house.” But O’Connor had not come that evening, Marie said, and she was not surprised by his apparent change of mind; O’Connor was a “very fickle man and would frequently come to see us and, after sitting down for a minute
or two, he would jump up suddenly and go away." She added that Patrick had friends at Vauxhall and suggested that they would probably know something about his whereabouts.

After some conversation about Marie’s recent visits to O’Connor’s lodgings, she suddenly exclaimed: "Poor O’Connor! He was the best friend I had in London." "Why poor O’Connor?" wondered Flynn, and thinking he detected a slight expression of discomfort in her features that he had not noticed before, he asked whether the room was perhaps too warm for her or whether she felt ill. She raised a hand to her face for a moment, but immediately recovering her composure, she said: "No, thank you, I have been ill for six weeks, and dare say I look rather pale, but there is nothing the matter with me." Flynn and the officer ended the interview at this point, perhaps less out of feelings of delicacy than a realistic conclusion that they would gain nothing from further questions at the moment.

Over the weekend Flynn had handbills circulated offering a ten-pound reward for information about the missing man:

Ten pound Reward — Missing

Mr. Patrick O’Connor, an officer of the Customs, who left his residence, 21, Greenwood street, Mile-end road, on Thursday morning, the 9th inst., and was seen near Weston street at 5 o’clock on the same afternoon. Description—50 years of age. 5 feet 11 inches high, fair complexion, light hair, stout made, and wears a false set of teeth.

If one were to disappear mysteriously, it would be well to have a relative as persistent and energetic as William Flynn. Not satisfied with the police activity he had stirred at two local stations, he now went directly from Minver Place to Scotland Yard, where he was promised every assistance he required to trace his missing cousin. On Monday night Flynn went again to O’Connor’s apartment to see whether any of his property was missing. He first opened a trunk in which he knew Patrick kept his cashbox, having little difficulty forcing the patent lock. Inside he found the cashbox in its usual place. It was an ordinary japanned box with three compartments. Flynn knew that Patrick used to keep securities in the end compartments
and his loose gold coins in the center compartment, which was covered by a slide. He discovered on examining the box that it was empty with the exception of a few scattered IOUs and memoranda and that the slide, instead of being in place, had been carelessly thrown down on the middle compartment.

Flynn had just returned home from another day of fruitless searching on Tuesday when Mr. Meade, a friend of O'Connor's, called on him with the disturbing news that the bird had flown. From neighbors Meade had learned that Mrs. Manning had been seen leaving her house at about four o'clock on Monday afternoon. She later returned in a cab and, picking up a large amount of luggage, drove off again. By Tuesday, Meade added, all the furniture had been removed from the house, which was now empty. Meade had already alerted the police at Stone's End Station, and they were surprised and chagrined that for some reason their promised watch of the house had been either nonexistent or easily eluded.

At 8:30 P.M. Tuesday evening, in response to Meade's information, Constable Burton was sent with Meade and two other friends of O'Connor to Minver Place. Finding the house closed up, they went through the adjoining house and over the wall, but the gymnastics were unnecessary because Meade had meanwhile obtained the housekey and let Burton in at the back door. The house appeared to have been left in a very confused state. There was a pile of linen in the front kitchen, and in the back kitchen over two large Yorkshire flagstones a large box or portmanteau lay open. Women's wearing apparel had been scattered about the room, and Burton also spotted a railway guard's coat. Upstairs clothes lay about in the same disorder. The searchers found nothing that belonged to Patrick O'Connor.

The next morning Burton kept watch at the house to see whether anyone would come for the rest of the Mannings' things. About 8:00 A.M. a man came and tried the front door but could not open it since Burton had locked it the night before with the latchkey. The visitor went off immediately to the police station to find out why the house was locked, unaware that Burton was following him at a discreet distance. The
The discovery of the body; illustration from Huish's *The Progress of Crime*.
A. Wall at the bottom of the kitchen-stairs, on which spots of blood were discovered, and near which it is supposed the air-gun was discharged.

C. Iron-barred window, through which the shadow of the Mannings was reflected on the garden-wall, late on the night of the murder.

D. Entrance to the kitchen where the body was found.

F. Fire-place where a goose was roasted, on the day after the murder, by Mrs. Manning.

G. Stone, under which the body was found.

H. Copper.
constable could not have been more pleased with the destination for which his quarry was heading. At the station it turned out that the man was a dealer named Bainbridge who had purchased the Mannings' household goods from Mr. Manning for thirteen pounds. Bainbridge had no interest in the linen, but he had come back to fetch away the railway guard's coat and some other things he had not yet had a chance to remove. He told the police that Manning had just left the Bainbridges' house.

Burton then accompanied Bainbridge back to Minver Place and watched him take away the remainder of his goods. Among the things Bainbridge took was a shovel that stood behind the door in the back kitchen. The courteous Constable Burton himself handed the shovel to Bainbridge.

On Friday Burton and Constable Barnes of the Stepney Division returned to 3 Minver Place for a more thorough inspection. They found Patrick O'Connor's body under the flagstones of the back kitchen where the open portmanteau had stood.