

that those tales contain more truth than could be found in the pages of 'London Labour and London Poor.'

A succession of speakers add their invective. Mr Hancock, a street seller (of what, we do not know) proposes a motion against the absent Mayhew; it is carried.

When we speak of the street pro, it is of people like this: proud, confident, perceptive. As stoical as Johnson or O'Cagnay, as articulate as Love or Thoresby, as accomplished as Waters or Cohen. They are self-respecting professionals. Some of them have even taken the effort to tell us so.<sup>44</sup>

## 6

# The Renegade

Everywhere in the street, there are professionals being useful. And everywhere, some among their number are failing. Down and out in London, possessed of your wits, one suit of torn clothing and precious little else, the doors begin to close. Most jobs require at least the appearance of respectability; most forms of relief, strings attached or otherwise, require a fixed address. Besides, the encounter with authority in the form of the so-called charitable institution can be a harrowing one, the sort of experience to turn a desperate person against society, rather than restore them to a place within it.

British society, especially in London, is yet to sort this out two centuries later; how much more precarious, embattled, let down, are those in an age when those in authority – the police, the courts, the parishes, the charities – lack the resources, the empathy, the inclination to understand them? By turns abandoned or persecuted by a system, less from malice than from unexamined prejudice, these people become renegades. London's outcasts, its afflicted, its petty criminals. Renegades, in that they have turned – or been turned – away from the dutiful path appointed by their betters, from a steady job and a fixed abode. Renegades, in that they suffer for it.

The early 1860s: a man known only as C.I., forty-five years old,

has gained his living for many years by selling in the streets. When he has sufficient means he deals in poultry and rabbits, but for a long time past he has been compelled to deal in shrimps and other articles which do not require much capital to start with.

A widower, he has been left with seven children – but a fourteen-year-old daughter ‘does her best to mind the rest’ while his eldest son, who is twelve, ‘has a place as errand boy, and brings home 6s. per week’. It is precarious, but it’s a system. Until, in the summer heat, he contracts a fever. He comes through it, but by the time he is released from the ‘Fever Hospital’, his children are scattered – two with a friend, five in the workhouse – and even when he reassembles his brood, it is only to ‘occupy a small room on the third floor of a house in one of the most wretched and depraved courts in the neighbourhood of Hampstead Road, at a rent of 2s. 6d. per week’.

Even so, things might recover – except that the fever has wrecked both his constitution and, worst of all, his voice, the one thing absolutely necessary to his trade of street selling. Gradually, they slide into starvation. Visited by one of those busybody investigators, Joshua Stallard, he is caught between his pride and his despair:

If I had £1, I think I could do well with it. This morning, a brother coster-monger, who did not buy anything himself, lent me 10s. I bought 3s.-worth of shrimps, and if, with my boy’s assistance, we are lucky enough to sell them all, we shall realise a profit of 2s., which is all we have to find our supper, the first meal we have had to-day. To-morrow my friend will want the money for his own use, and I must go without. We starve a day, and then, if I borrow enough to earn a few shillings, we are obliged to spend it in food, and get no forwarder.

This brutal assessment impresses Stallard, who notes that ‘the truth of this story is written on the man’s face, and in the misery and squalor of the whole family’. But Stallard has seen many such cases; he knows the system, and – unlike C.I. – he is able to pin down the source of the problem. Under the current Poor Law, ‘the system says, inexorably, an able-bodied man shall not be relieved’ – and so C.I. can only apply for assistance when ill and starving, and even then ‘is relieved casually’ with a few shillings, all of which keeps him on the brink of disaster. How unlike ‘the enlightened philanthropy of the Jews’, Stallard reflects, who see the wisdom of extending enough credit to set someone up with enough capital to make a go of things. As it is, C.I. and his family are slipping into penury. In their failure to conform to the narrow demands of an inflexible system of relief, they are becoming renegades.<sup>1</sup>

The worst of it is C.I.’s need to pay for his outgoings up front – the ‘few shillings’ he is ‘obliged to spend on food’, along with that fat from inconsiderable two and six a week on rent for one small room. Only the self-evidently well-off can get these things on credit; no one will lend to a pauper, let alone give them an unpaid bed. When times are rough, and rent impossible to come by, the most immediate place of refuge for the night is to be found in a casual ward – the temporary shelters run by workhouses and similar institutions on the rough model of Dante’s Inferno.

July 1866: a ‘pauper widow’ using the names Ellen Stanley, Ellen Taylor and Jane Wood is hired by Stallard to visit four of these wards incognito – he wants someone ‘accustomed to dirt and rags, and hardships’, who ‘by a course of suffering has been prepared to endure misery of the very lowest kind without a murmur of complaint’, in order to provide copy for his social journalism. Her account – though watered down by Stallard, who found it ‘absolutely necessary to soften down much of the language, which was too

She survives – but will not visit another such place for even the noblest of causes.

Those she meets, however, cannot be so discriminating. One such is Sally, or ‘Cranky Sal’, whose path she crosses first on 17 July at Lambeth. Sal, thirty-seven and ‘stoutish’, takes the newcomer’s part, defending her against the suspicions of the other women. Later in the night, she shares her story.

Having roamed the countryside with a friend known as ‘Navy Nell’, sleeping in haystacks, cadging change and bits of work, she and Nell have made it to London, where the latter, more successful in her ventures, is ‘now well togged up’ – so much so that she has abandoned Sal. Sal is now a regular of the casual wards, particularly fond of the beds at Richmond and the food at Marylebone, where she knows the nurse, and can use ‘her reputation for crankiness to get into the imbecile ward’. Emboldened by their shared confidences, Sal thinks she has found herself a new partner, and suggests the next morning ‘that I should go to Wimbledon with her’, where there is an army camp. Alarmed, the investigator tries and fails to shake her off – ‘but in Lambeth Walk she complained of thirst, and I offered her a pint of porter, which she drank with great gusto, whilst I gave her the slip and returned home’.

Yet, to her ‘astonishment’, after her night of hell in St George’s she finds that Sal has been one of her ‘fellow-sufferers’. Her crankiness is to the fore – starting a row with another inmate, she is confronted by a woman of around sixty who ‘struck her a most violent blow in the face ... the savage manner of her blow not only frightened Sally but all the rest’. Rising above it, however, Sal once again befriends the author – to whom she says, “‘I think I have seen you before;” but I pretended not to know her’. Changing the subject, the investigator asks about her black eye, “‘How did you get that?’”

‘She replied, “because I would not let a man do as he liked with me;” upon which all the rest set up a loud laugh.’ But Sal has her dignity and her honour, and defends herself against their insinuations. Later, she once again confides in the writer:

‘I met a man on Saturday night in the New Cut, and he asked me if I would have a pennyworth of wheelks. He seemed decently dressed, and I told him I didn’t mind.’

‘What time was that, Sally?’ said I; and she replied, ‘It was getting late. He then asked me if I would have a pie, so I said I didn’t mind, and I had a twopenny pie, for I thought I might as well have a twopenny one as a penny one. Then we strolled along, and stopping at a doorway he offered me a shilling. He said that would get a lodging for the night, and by this time we reached St George’s in the Borough, and he asked me if I was going to take his money, and I said “Oh no! I don’t do business like that,” and he gave me a violent blow. I screamed out, and he ran away. I began to cry, and a policeman came up, to whom I complained; but he only laughed at me and said that the man must have a strong stomach to fancy such as me.’

Everyone, it seems, treats Sal badly. Yet, she protests:

‘I do not really do anything really bad. You know what I mean; I beg and pick up what I can, and go about anywhere for a bit of food or a night’s lodging. Sometimes I make do on what they give me at these places here; sometimes I get a few pence given me.’

While the pie-buying sex-pest probably did her the greatest injury, the blows she feels the most are those of personal betrayal – and none more so than from the woman she met the week before:

‘... who gave me a piece of bread-and-meat and three-quarters of a pint of beer. I thought she was going to be kind to me and be my pal, but whilst I was eating and drinking she ran away, just as the other did. I am very badly off now.’

The author is not insensible – she writes ‘Poor Sally! I am convinced she is not vicious, and is to be greatly pitied.’ Yet she fails to reflect on the fact that she herself, listening with such sympathy, is in fact this worst and latest Judas.<sup>3</sup>

A couple of years later a youth, aged around eighteen, is out of work. He pawns his watch and his clothes, he goes on tramp, in the vain hope of some casual employment on the road. Finally, he and two friends try to enlist; the friends are taken, but he is rejected for being ‘half an inch too short. I had just enough for a night’s lodging, and next day had to start begging.’ He stalks Covent Garden, helps to shift manure ‘for a few coppers’, scavenges the detritus of the market, and sleeps ‘in casual wards. The filthiest one was near Grosvenor Square.’

But this boy isn’t just anyone. He’s the nose-bleeding, self-starting, bowing-and-scraping, wheeler-dealing, father-confronting Charles Humphreys, last seen in Chapter Two. And, always with an eye to the commercial, he soon realises that, thanks to the obligatory labour:

In all casual wards they always turned you out not before eleven in the morning, and the time for earning a few coppers round the markets was gone, so as a rule I slept anywhere. Brick-fields, old carts turned up, buildings in the course of erection....

He knows a place in Great Windmill Street where you can get water, soap, a comb – all essential if you want to look like an employable person – and is not above washing his shirt ‘in the canal near Kensal Green gas works’. Yet even the plucky Humphreys has his limits:

I did on one occasion lay in the green Park one afternoon dirty, and it did seem hard lines for a young fellow trying to do the right and yet to be as I was just then.

A little water did run out of my head, and I made a noise I suppose and a bobby came to me and asked me what was the matter. I told him I felt a bit downhearted; that was all. Got up and walked away.<sup>4</sup>

When you’re on a downward spiral, sleeping rough or in a hellhole, it is easy to lose all hope. Humphreys may come through his wobble; he may not. But he and Sal, and all the others, are on the edge. One false step, one slip, one hesitation, and the life of the renegade beckons.

Friday, 16 February 1838: we return to John James Bezer on the ninth day of his career as a busker. As we have seen, in many ways Bezer is ill-fitted to a life on the edge: even now, aged twenty-two, he remains so innocent that he has never heard of the Mendicity Society. Walking up High Holborn, he meets a man. Specifically, the man is a living, shouting advertisement: ‘Give no money to beggars, – food, work, and clothing, are given away to them by applying to the Mendicity Society, Red Lion Square.’ Learning on further enquiry that, if he wants help, he will need to obtain one of the Society’s tickets, he hastens to the profitable begging ground of Russell Square, where he gets a ticket ‘of the third person I asked’. Proceeding to Red Lion Square, he mounts the imposing steps of No. 13 and knocks at the door ‘with joy and boldness:

‘What do you want’, said the opener. ‘Here’s a ticket, sir,’ (showing it for fear he wouldn’t believe me) ‘I want to see the gentlemen

Somehow, Bezer talks himself out of it; in fact, so loquacious and so indignant is he, that they are more than happy to feed him, if only it will shut him up and move him on. Yet even when he gets his 'half-a-pound of bread' and a piece of cheese, he is not allowed to take it back to his family, but must eat it on the spot.<sup>7</sup>

'I shall not,' said I.

'You must.'

'I won't.'

'Then give it back.'

'I won't do that either.'

'Then come along with me,' and I was again before the immortal six.

'Sir, he won't eat his bread and cheese.'

'O, then let him give it back.'

'He won't do that, sir.'

'You must, sir,' said the Chairman to me.

'I won't.'

'You must, I tell you, it's the rule, and you must obey it.'

'I don't care about your *rules*, I want to share it with those I love, who are as hungry as I am, and if you are a Devil with no natural feelings, I am not. Get out of the way, beadle,' and out I rushed, like one mad, through the crowd of astonished beggars, right into the street, without one stopping me.

Easy to imagine yourself in Bezer's position, wishing to feed your family, unwittingly walking into the trap of severe bureaucracy. Far harder to imagine volunteering your time to serve on the board of the Society, only to conduct yourself in such an ogreish manner. Maybe these men start out full of Christian charity and idealism - tempered,

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\* Some 227 grams; by 1847 it is 60 grams more.

of course, with the prejudices of their class and their day - and grow embittered by experience; grow, perhaps, a carapace of unfeeling to guard against the barbs of sudden sympathy. But we are not concerned with their psyches, or their souls, here. It is Bezer who concerns us, pushed over the edge by this final injustice. From this hour, he is a renegade - yet it takes him from our sight, for he is immediately enlisted by his humane landlord into the cause of politics:

'Ah,' says he, 'there'll be no good done in this country till the Charter becomes the law of the land.'

'The Charter?'

'Yes, I'm a Chartist - they meet tonight at Lunt's Coffee House on the Green - will you come?'

'Yes.' It was only a 'Locality' meeting, but there were about sixty people present, and as one after another got up, oh, how I sucked in all they said! 'Why should one man be a slave to another? Why should the many starve, while the few roll in luxuries? Who'll join us, and be free?'

'I will,' cried I, jumping up in the midst. 'I will, and be the most zealous among you - give me a card and let me enrol.'

And so ... I became a Rebel; that is to say:- Hungry in a land of plenty, I began seriously for the first time in my life to enquire WHY, WHY - a dangerous question ... isn't it, for a poor man to ask?<sup>8</sup>

Honest, earnest, idealistic, it makes perfect sense that Bezer reacts as he does - which extends, of course, to penning his account, which is sounding ever more like a political pamphlet, or a secular sort of conversion narrative. But others, less upstanding and without the coincidence of timing and opportunity that leads to Bezer's awakening as an activist, can hardly be blamed if their own response to similar circumstances is a little less... principled.

Spring, 1800, outside 53 Fleet Street: James Hardy Vaux is a young man, well brought up. The son of a Holborn hatter-cum-hosier, schooled in leafy Surrey, raised in part by respectable grandparents. Though short, he is fair faced, with light brown hair neatly curled, and large grey eyes. Come up to London, he has trained as an articulated clerk - chucked it in for a higher salary and more freedom at a wholesale stationer's - developed a taste for high living... you can guess the rest. Having been extended substantial credit due to his appearance and accent (unlike most of those we have met) he has racked up debts for clothes and goods, and taken to quitting temporary lodgings at dead of night to avoid settling up with landlords. Fetching up at the Blue Lion, Gray's Inn Lane, he falls in with a bad crowd. From this point on, he becomes a thorough-going renegade.<sup>9</sup>

There follow various travels by land and sea, in love and gambling, in and out of work - and, inevitably, through the courts and the house of correction over cases of fraud, which he escapes without a conviction, yet without much else either. All of which brings him to Fleet Street on this fine spring morning. The shopfront of No. 53\* is that of Messrs Laurie and Whittle, printers - and, like many printmakers, their glass panes are a riot of colour and image. As William Hone will recollect years later:

[A]t Jemmy Whittle's there was always a change of prints in springtime. Jemmy liked, as he said, to 'give the public something alive, fresh and clever, classical and correct!' ... I remember that in springtime Jemmy Whittle and [Henry] Carrington [sic]

\* Now long gone - though the Edwardian upper storeys of the building that stands there are well worth a crane of the neck.

Bowles in St Paul's Churchyard, used to decorate their panes with twelve prints of flowers of 'the months', engraved after Baptiste and coloured 'after nature' - a show almost, at that time, as gorgeous as 'Solomon's Temple in all its glory, all over nothing but gold and jewels', which a man exhibited to my wondering eyes for a halfpenny.<sup>10</sup>

If, as is likely, these flower prints come from the publisher Bowles' own collection, then this window on to Fleet Street is blooming with pasque flowers, daffodils, anemones, fritillaria, violets, crown imperials, lily of the valley, hyacinths, guelder roses, jonquils, auricula, ranunculi, tulips - a riot of gaudy yellows, purples, whites; a frothing pastoral vision amid the soot and cobbles.<sup>11</sup> No wonder that people stop, linger, gather, nostrils vainly twitching for the scents their eyes lead them to yearn for.

Which is where Vaux enters the scene.

Earlier this morning he has been snared by Alexander Bromley, a man he met while awaiting trial, given drink and led into pick-pocketing, assured over his protestations of ineptitude that 'we should have at least one other person with us, and that he himself [Bromley] would work, while he only required me and the third man to cover him'. As Vaux has, in his own assessment, 'no scruples of conscience to overcome', the arrangement is made. And where better to operate, than where 'a crowd of gazers' stands rapt before flowers?

Bromley immediately joined the throng, we keeping close behind him wherever he moved; at length he gave us a sign to cover, and we had scarcely taken our stations, before Bromley drew back, and pulling the skirt of my coat, left the crowd, and crossing the way, turned up a court which led into another street. We followed him close, till he entered a public house, and we were no sooner

in a private room, than Bromley drew from under his coat a large green pocketbook, which, it seems, he had, unobserved by me, extracted from the pocket of a gentleman by whose side he stood, when we advanced to cover him.<sup>12</sup>

This single, decisive action nets Vaux nearly £4 for his part standing watch – as much profit as an ordinary street performer or seller might hope to make in three months – ‘but my two companions having observed some police-officers in Fleet-Street, deemed it imprudent to prolong our stay in that quarter’. Vaux can scarcely believe his luck, and for all his history of debt, he has enough of a head for figures to see that, from this side of the law, the street can be an immensely profitable place of work.

Pickpocketing, like any other occupation, requires a certain skill. Thomas Wontner – who has spent time with hundreds of them in the course of his duties advising the accused before trial at the Old Bailey – judges that ‘the qualifications for a pickpocket are a light tread, a delicate sense of touch, combined with firm nerves ... they generally wear pumps, or shoes of a very light make’. Like Bromley and Vaux, they make their plans and share their spoils out of sight, never loitering, and keep their tools to an absolute minimum: a small pair of scissors, to be used only in extremis, ‘to cut the pocket and all off, when they cannot abstract its contents’.<sup>13</sup> Above all, the good pickpocket is never rash, always scoping out an opportunity before acting. A lesson that Vaux learns beneath the walls of Newgate Prison itself:

[O]bserving a grave-looking elderly gentleman, who was walking just before me, to have a pocketbook in his outside coat-pocket, I made an attempt to ease him of it; but it being of an unusual size, and rather ponderous, it slipped from my fingers, and alarmed

the gentleman; who, turning round sharply, and seeing me close behind him, clapped his hand upon my shoulder, saying very drily, ‘Holloa! young man, when did you come to town?’ I of course affected to be much surprised, and with a look of displeasure at his freedom, begged he would explain his meaning. The stranger, staring me full in the face, and smiling sarcastically, pointed with his finger to the opposite walls; and, in a low voice, said, ‘You see that stone building, my pretty youth; mark my words, that will be your resting place very soon.’<sup>14</sup>

Again, Vaux is luckier than most: his gentleman’s appearance, though it does not fool the older man, is probably what saves him from a much nastier scene. But if he is the wiser for the experience, Bromley is not – and it is the impetuous, disreputable Bromley who brings about Vaux’s downfall.

17 August 1800, a Sunday:

[A]bout one o’clock [we] entered Cheapside, when we observed a great concourse of people assembled round the door and windows of a draper’s shop. [Bromley] was scrutinizing the pockets of the spectators. I was however at some distance from him, and signified my dissent by a look; in fact, I had no sooner ascertained the object of the people’s curiosity, which was an attempt made in the preceding night to break the shop open, of which the shutters bore evident marks, than I beckoned to Bromley, and made the best of my way out of the crowd ... and turned round to see if Bromley was coming.

... I saw my poor companion struggling with a man who held him at arm’s length with one hand, and had in the other a silk handkerchief; at the same time calling after a person who had also left the crowd, and was proceeding the contrary way (towards St Paul’s) – ‘Stop, sir, come back; you’re robb’d!’ The person called

to immediately turned back, and at the same moment the fellow who held Bromley, seeing me looking earnestly at the transaction, exclaimed, pointing at me, 'Stop him in the blue coat! that's the other.' Knowing my innocence, I did not attempt to escape; and a man now advancing to the spot where I stood, seized me by the collar, and dragged me back to the crowd.<sup>15</sup>

Once again - reassured by his purely coincidental innocence - Vaux trusts to his respectability to save him. It does not. Their apprehenders are officers of the law; Vaux and Bromley have three silk handkerchiefs upon them; they are committed for trial. What really rankles with Vaux - pickpocket, conman, burglar, shoplifter - is the injustice: he wouldn't mind so much if he'd been caught in the act, but to be arrested the one time he hasn't stolen anything himself is a bitter irony to stomach.

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We are by now no strangers to the law and its arbitrary machinations. Vaux and Bromley first come up before a sympathetic Lord Mayor at the Mansion House, but the arresting officers take care to represent them as 'notorious', and the discovery of a small knife, and a pair of scissors' among each of their effects seals it: they are sent on to the Old Bailey.<sup>16</sup>

Here is reform-minded Wontner again. To him, justice seems far from blindfolded, dispassionate:

I have sometimes thought, witnessing the conduct of the judges at the Old Bailey, that they, seeing it impossible to make any impression on the hardened offender, appeared to make up for this disappointment by a system of terrorism over the more timid and less offending.

He is under no illusions: a case's outcome cannot be predicted, the whims of judge and jury being wholly irrational, and easily affected by private interference - this sort of influence being 'an everyday affair'. Above all, the whole system is fatally undermined by the volume of trials and the speed of its operations - something that goes unrecorded in the official reports. 'For several sessions I made a calculation of the average time which each trial occupied. I never found it exceed eight and a half minutes, notwithstanding many cases engage the court occasionally a whole day.' Most cases, that is, take rather less than that 510-second average:

The rapidity with which the trials are despatched throws the prisoners into the utmost confusion. Fifty or sixty of them are kept in readiness in the dock under the court, to be brought up as they may be called for. These men, seeing their fellow-prisoners return tried and found guilty in a minute or two after having been taken up, become so alarmed and nervous, in consequence of losing all prospect of having a patient trial, that ... they lose all command over themselves, and are then, to use their own language, taken up to be knocked down like bullocks, unheard. Full two-thirds of the prisoners, on their return from their trials, cannot tell of any thing which has passed in the court, not even, very frequently, whether they have been tried ... conceiving, from the celerity with which the business was performed, that he had only been up to plead, or see a fresh jury empanelled ... It was a boast at the Old Bailey, that a recent city judge could dispatch sixty or seventy trials a-day.<sup>17</sup>

Vaux, as usual, is better off than most: he can afford the services of Mr Alley, an energetic defence counsel who knows that this is a game of prejudice and emotion, not of hard logic. Alley does a



thorough job of entangling the arresting officers in contradictions and questioning their motivation, and puts moral pressure on the plaintiff – the handkerchief's owner, William Dewell:

Q. How long might you have stopped?

A. About three minutes.

Q. How long before had you felt your handkerchief?

A. Just by the Mansion-house.

Q. Upon your solemn oath, you mean to swear you did not drop your handkerchief instead of putting it in your pocket?

A. I cannot.

Q. Do you know that these men are trying for an offence for which they must be hanged, if they are convicted?

A. I did not know that.

Both defendants call character witnesses; things are looking good. Yet the verdict comes in: guilty. Perhaps it's those scissors again. The only consolation is that the jury have devalued the handkerchief from two shillings to eleven pence – for until 1808, one shilling in value was the cut-off above which theft was 'grand larceny', punishable by death (albeit invariably commuted to a lesser sentence by the late-eighteenth century), and below which it was mere 'petty larceny' – so that Vaux still hopes to get off with 'a small fine'.

Charles Humphreys, our other renegade, is offered the same punishment when he is pulled up for causing an obstruction. Defiant, Humphreys instead opts for prison, 'just to see what it was like' – only to spend his time behind bars acting boorishly, singing through the night, disdainful of the food, and eventually tiring of incarceration and sending for a friend to stump up the original fine.<sup>18</sup> This arbitrary justice works both ways: sometimes you can more or less shrug it off. This is what Vaux is hoping for, anyway.

30 September, the last day of the session when sentences are handed down *en masse*: clearly a decision has been taken at a higher level, and forty prisoners, Vaux and Bromley among them, are sentenced together to transportation. Seven years in Australia.<sup>19</sup>

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Surviving transportation, Vaux returns to London and to his renegade habits. His narrative of further fraud, cheating and pickpocketing is a compelling and intensely stressful read, forever on the point of apprehension: narrowly escaping an irate crowd outside Drury Lane theatre; only just avoiding a sentence over a snuffbox; getting into a very tight spot between a jeweller and a pawnbroker. Eventually he is caught, tried and again transported – the fate that, according to Wontner, is the only thing dreaded by the habitual offender. Wontner is told the following story by an inmate named Lee:

A man named Shaw, who suffered for housebreaking about two years since, awoke during the night previous to his execution, and said, 'Lee!' (speaking to the man in the cell with him,) 'I have often said, I would be rather hanged than transported; but now it comes so close as this, I begin to think otherwise.' Shortly afterwards he turned round to the same man and said, 'I was wrong in what I said just now; I am still of my former opinion: hanging is the best of the two.'<sup>20</sup>

It is the atmosphere more than the details of Vaux's tribulations that gets to us: his crimes are so petty, so tawdry, and his profits hard-won at the price of a life of constant vigilance. The life of a renegade remakes the streets around you: a place of opportunity, yet devoid of refuge. As with the honest street worker or beggar, every prosperous passer-by represents a chance for gain – but