

While the Troops Were Away

"King Mob," by Christopher Hibbert (*World*, 249 pp. \$4.95), is an account of Lord George Gordon and his nefarious role in the turbulent anti-Catholic riots of 1780.

By John T. Winterich

THIS is the story of the London "No Popery" riots of June, 1780, and of their instigator, Lord George Gordon. America is one up on England here; the New York draft riots of 1863 produced a thousand deaths, more or less; the best figure Mr. Hibbert can come up with for his show is "probably not less than 850." Mobs do not customarily maintain registration services for graves; mortuary data are, of necessity, sketchy.

The London ruckus began with a march on Parliament by 40,000 anti-Catholic petitioners, but the procession quickly got out of hand. When the rioters broke into Newgate and freed the inmates, the fat was in the fire. Other prisons were soon emptied, and 2,000 convicts, many

of them under sentence of death, stormed through the streets in heady freedom. A captured distillery contributed its contents to the pandemonium; when the structure was set afire, many of the celebrants were in such profound alcoholic stupor that they quietly burned to death. The basic cause of the trouble had quickly been forgotten—this was rioting for rioting's sake. For one warm spring week, London was hell on earth. The property loss was stupendous.

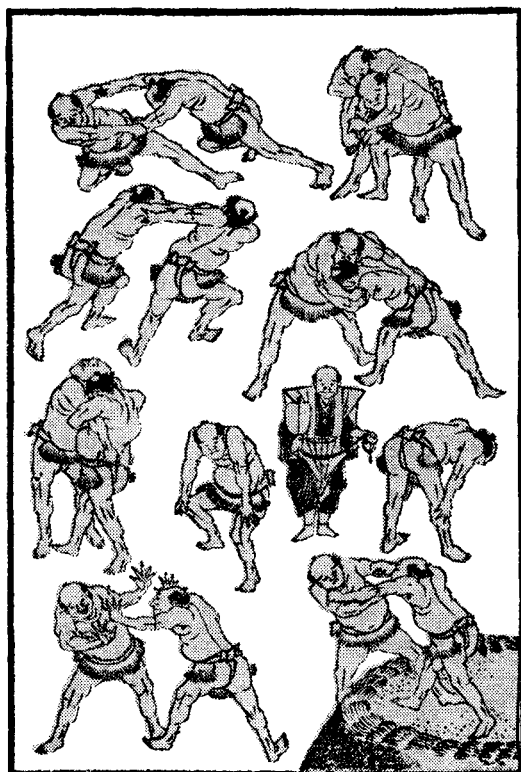
Why didn't somebody break the thing up? Why didn't somebody break up the Johnstown flood? London had no police force in the modern sense. Most of the soldiery were in America. Such troops as were mustered could get no orders from the civil authority and held their fire. When a few muskets finally did let loose, not over heads but into them, the beginning of the end was at hand.

Lord George Gordon was tried for high treason and acquitted on grounds of insanity. Imprisoned in a refurbished Newgate on a libel conviction, he spent the rest of his life there

in considerable comfort, and died within the walls in 1793, aged forty-one. Sometime in the late 1780s he had become an orthodox Jew, and he remained firm in his new faith to the end.

Mr. Hibbert has let his story pick its own gait; no build-up, no dramatizing was needed. Many of his cited eye-witnesses, moreover, were themselves highly capable recorders of events. No other comparable convulsion was ever beheld at such close range by so notable a roster of writers. Fanny Burney, unfortunately, was out of town, but her father, and her sisters Charlotte and Susan, were unwilling but not unobserving front-row spectators. Edward Gibbon saw history made before his eyes by "the scum" that "boiled up to the surface in the huge cauldron" of beleaguered London. Sir Joshua Reynolds sped to the home of his friends Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Burke, who had been frantically packing their papers. Hester Lynch Thrale's brewery was saved from destruction only by the "astounding presence of mind" of its manager. Horace Walpole's letters recreated the whole affair voluminously and vividly. James Boswell pontificated that "there was no combination or plan either domestic or foreign" behind the incident, thus absolving the Americans and the French of

(Continued on page 31)



SKETCHES FROM LIFE: Contrary to the stylized art of Japan most familiar to Westerners are the sketches of the nineteenth-century woodblock artist, Hokusai. His fifteen volumes of *Manga*, or "sketches from life," capture the roistering vitality of fishermen, jugglers, dancers, and wrestlers. In *"The Hokusai Sketchbooks"* (Tuttle, \$10), James A. Michener, who selected an abundant representation of Hokusai's exuberant works, enhances the reader's enjoyment with extensive and appreciative commentaries.



The Active Life of *Número Uno*

"Arena," by Charles Grayson (Rinehart. 312 pp. \$3.95), is a novel about a famed matador who has his troubles both in and out of the bull ring. The noted English critic Kenneth Tynan, who reviews the book, is a long-time aficionado and the author of *"Bull Fever."*

By Kenneth Tynan

BASICALLY, there are only two bullfight novels. One deals with a novice on the way up, the other with a veteran on the way down. (The same applies to novels about prize fighting and the theatre.) Or perhaps one should say they are two halves of the same novel. Part I: Manolo, child of the Seville slums, learns his art by practising at night with illegal bulls, achieves premature fame, is spurned by duke's daughter, takes to sherry, staggers into ring for vital comeback fight, is gored, staggers back to triumph (*viz.*: "The old Duque was first on his feet, crying: 'This it is to torry bulls! Not since Joselito, brother of the Divine Bald One, have these eyes seen the receiving kill, most difficult of all hazards, so nobly executed!' And the tears staining his daughter's proud cheekbones affirmed that the wizened grandee spoke sooth.") In Part II, Manolo is a waning star who clings to his profession because of "something throbbing deep down that sang in his blood as it had sung in his father's." By luck he gets a contract to appear in Madrid, staggers into ring for comeback fight, is gored, staggers back to triumph. This time everyone is first on his feet, and there isn't a dry cheekbone in the plaza.

Mr. Grayson has broken with custom by writing neither of these stories, and on this he must be congratulated. On little else, however. Instead of hysterical melodrama, he gives us static melodrama: his hero Rodrigo, a surly blockhead, is the undisputed *número uno* of bullfighting at the beginning of the book, and remains so to the end. The American in the story, on whom the sale of the screen rights depends, is a divorced journalist who writes bullfight reviews and travels between Spain and Mexico, presumably to offer a choice of locations. His conversation is a picturesque blend of

the laconic ("If you've got a burr up your butt, let's unwind it") and the ecstatic ("It isn't a sport, Bill! An exhibition! A spectacle of death, with a catharsis of pity and fear.") This attempt to be rapturous and tight-lipped at the same time, not unknown elsewhere in recent American writing, produces some weird results, as when the journalist, hearing that he may become boss of an international press agency, exclaims: "I had no idea—somewhere up there, yes. But top-side!" The plot, an affair of fits and stops, concerns his battle with the matador for the bed of a high-born girl named Stella, who has "eyes luminous behind their fence of dark lashes," and an old father up to here in nostalgia: "Lifting a glass to [the portrait], he again blessed the genius Augustus John for having captured the essence of his dead wife for whom he would long forever." The only safe way to write about hot countries is to stick to a cool style. Mr. Grayson's is sunstruck.

I don't blame him, however, for failing to solve the two biggest problems facing the Anglo-Saxon bullfight novelist. One is the matter of translating Spanish colloquialisms: Andalusian banter (*e.g.*, "Little filth! I'll spank you dumb") invariably sounds strained and clotted in English. The other is even more difficult: how to convey to the nonexpert enough unobtrusive technical knowledge for him to understand what is going on in the ring. Mr. Grayson fails out of anxiety to impart too much. We thus get bullfighters and *aficionados* constantly exchanging, with elaborate casualness, items of taurine information which both must have known since childhood. But this kind of thing is probably unavoidable and won't disturb the average reader.

Specialists, over whom any book with a bull in it exerts a steady charm, will be quick to jump on the technical errors, especially as the literary rewards are so slight. Mr. Grayson knows enough about the bulls (indeed, his novel might be described as a "Corrida's Digest") not to be forgiven his two major gaffes: he seems unaware that tails are never awarded as trophies in Madrid, and on two occasions he has a *novillero* fighting on the same bill with full matadors, which would be impossible anywhere.



—Robert L. Hill.

William Du Bois—"authentic detail and penetrating observation."

Marquee Making

"The Falcon's Shadow," by William Du Bois (Putnam. 252 pp. \$3.75), delves into the theatrical world of Broadway in a story about producers, stars, and "angels." It is reviewed by John G. Fuller, who recently adapted the novel *"Love Me Little"* for the stage.

By John G. Fuller

THERE are as many theories as to what makes a good novel as there are novels. Sooner or later, they all boil down to two things: do you believe the story, and do you really care about the people in it.

"The Falcon's Shadow" is written with solid, professional authority. The background—that of the Broadway theater and of a play in the making—is sketched with authentic detail and penetrating observation. But when Mr. Du Bois gets around to people, he is not on such sure ground. He simply does not provide us with anyone we can really care for, and the things that his people do are hard to believe.

Channing Phelps, the weak and vacuous producer of the play, is depicted in a style equally weak, vacuous, and ill-defined. Pat Malone, the wealthy backer of the play, is not meant to be sympathetic—but she isn't interesting enough to command the attention she receives. Dick Sargent, the stage manager, and Sally Blake, the star-in-the-making, are both only illusive shadows of people. Roy Girard, the director, does not come out of the printed page with