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AT A BALL IN NICARAGUA.

The question uppermost in my mind was, what should I wear? I had with me a new dress suit, a hunting outfit and a tennis costume of dazzling brilliancy. It was almost a forlorn conclusion that I would paralyze the Castilians with a swallow-tailed coat, when my friend entered and insisted on my going dressed, or rather undressed, as I was.

The hall—an old bar-room, the floor of which had been neatly swept and sanded, was moored on four piles over the river, where the cooling trade wind might temper the heat of the dance. No one had yet arrived, so we stood at the counter drinking tafia as the soldiers fixed their bayonets.

"You see, we never enjoy a feast in Castillo without the military," said the commandante, who had joined us, as his men began to group themselves about the room. "It would not be safe," he continued, "for the Costa Ricans might attack us at any moment; and then when either the men or women get too full of tafia, nothing but a bayonet can bring them to their senses."

With this cheering prospect in view for an evening's entertainment, I stood near an open window and watched the crowd. "Adios, Señor Comandante; adios, caballero," was the musical greeting softly whispered from lips that needed no rouge to make them blush the traditional hue of the peach. The women were in their black, yellow and brown; and their costumes, if such they might be called, were marvels of brilliant colors.

Three uneven musicians now began to make the night hideous, their instruments of torture being a bass drum, a fife and a wire-strung guitar, from which issued sounds like a chorus of mosquitoes. Each glibly seized a female, without saying a word as they went.

I promptly declined this generous offer and moved across the room. The fellow still followed, however, insisting on my taking a drink of tafia with him to show there was no hard feeling. Finding himself again refused, he went away. It was getting late, but the musicians were still pouring their money. The band had ceased only once during the evening, and then just long enough to gather strength for a fresh attack and obtain an ample fee.

to see the head of his instrument. The dancers became more excited, likewise the musicians. Wild and fantastic strains echoed throughout the hall. But the climax was reached when the manipulator of the bass drum missed his aim and struck the life player a vicious blow on the head that almost stunned him. Now the music ceased and a free fight ensued, the friends of each championing their man.

Discretion taught me that it was time to retire; but just as I reached the door, the drunken fellow who had previously annoyed me stood there with a savage glare in his dark eyes. Glancing at my blazer, he said, in an insulting tone, "Very dear and respected friend, I like much your fancy coat. What you will sell to me for?"

I informed that my coat was not for sale, and started to move away. He was determined to get into a fight, however, and with this end in view he grabbed at my right arm, tearing away part of the sleeve. For the first since my arrival in Nicaragua I was without a revolver, and at a time when I most needed one. There was nothing within sight but a small stool, which I quickly caught by the feet and swung aloft. As soon as the Indian saw this he reached down and drew from his sash a pair of machetes. Before he could raise his arm, however, my friend and the Comandante, who had just entered, seized the fellow and turned him over to the soldiers.

Thus ended a memorable fandango that shall ever be recalled as I hear the San Juan breaking over the rapids, and look upon the green hills of Castillo, peaceful home of the simple-minded Indians.—W. Nephew King, Jr., in Harper's Weekly.

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