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LOST HER DRESS—BUT WON HER HUSBAND!

The Unique Romance of a Pretty School Teacher Who Had Forsworn Men and Marriage to Solve the Mystery of the Ancient Cliff Dwellers—Now She's Rich Mrs. Wickes!

TO her sensible, serviceable woolen walking costume and to her own bravery and resolution, a former public school teacher of Pittsburgh, Pa., owes her recently acquired position as wife of the son of one of Colorado's richest ranchers and mining men.

This is literally the Romance of a Brave Girl's Woolen Skirt, for it was her costume on that memorable day had been of any more flimsy material, the happy young husband would not now be alive to tell the story. But in owing his life to her—and the skirt—and in winning her for his bride, he robbed the scientific world of one of its most enthusiastic and promising young archaeologists, a young woman of brilliant attainments, who, though exceedingly pretty and femininely graceful, had forswn men and matrimony in favor of a career among the rapidly increasing number of women who are Doing Things.

At the close of the school year last Spring in Pittsburgh Miss Imogen Clarke resigned her position in one of the upper grades—where she was near the head of the line for promotion to the coveted post of principal—and set out for the land of the prehistoric cliff dwellers in Southern Colorado.

From early girlhood archaeology had been Miss Clarke's favorite study. She had made herself mistress of the lore of ancient Egypt and Babylon, had deciphered for herself the hieroglyphics on tablets and pottery fragments dug up by the great German, Schliemann, from the ruins of ancient Troy; had compared Schliemann's evidence that the most ancient of the cities under the Trojan site had been tributary to the great empire of lost Atlantis with similar evidence that the very ancient Toltecs of the Yucatan peninsula had sprung from Atlantean ancestry and had formulated her own personal theory that the Colorado and Arizona cliff dwellers were also Atlantean in their origin.

To seek for evidence in support of this theory had long been Miss Clarke's fixed purpose. In preparation for a modest expedition into that desolate region under her personal leadership she had lived frugally, laying aside the larger part of her salary as school teacher. Last Winter a legacy of a few thousand dollars enabled her to broaden the scope of her researches—she would devote her whole future to the study of civilizations long dead and buried. She was not yet twenty-six years old, and was almost alone in the world. For her companion in her explorations she selected a sensible and robust distant relative, a middle-aged spinster, Miss Helen Doherly, whom she had known from childhood as "Aunt Nelly." Before her friends realized that they were serious in their adventurous purpose, Miss Clarke and "Aunt Nelly," properly outfitted, were en route to the Navajo country.

At Pueblo they completed their equipment, which included three pack mules besides their own mounts and a guide, who was also man-of-all-work for the little expedition. A week later they arrived safely at the Mesa Verde, where stands the famous restored "Balcony House," declared by Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, of the School of American Archaeology, to have been the citadel where the ancient cliff dwellers made their last unsuccessful stand against their marauding enemies from the plains.

Making Balcony House their headquarters and base of supplies, the adventurous young woman and her sturdy woman companion began their careful inspection of every promising cave and cliff throughout that region.

She was innocent of all knowledge that, in the meantime, Fate—had been commandered by Cupid as his aid in bending her to that tricky god's old familiar purpose. Young Leroy Wickes, son and heir of the millionaire rancher and mining man of that name, was returning from the direction of El Paso with a small party of prospectors. If young Wickes hadn't got separated from the party forty miles to the south of Balcony House and wandered to the westward of the trail, archaeology might still have been saved the loss of Miss Clarke. But Fate saw to it that every hour of that eventful day saw them headed steadily toward each other, though each was profoundly igno-

rant of so much as the earthly existence of the other.

Miss Clarke and her companion had arranged to camp that night under an overhanging cliff, with eloquent possibilities in its weather-beaten sculptures front, some ten miles to the south of Balcony House. Early in the afternoon she found it necessary to send the guide back to headquarters for some scientific instruments which had been forgotten. Thus the two ladies were left to their own devices for nearly three hours. They put in their time exploring the ledge on which their camp was located, which was the margin of a small canyon. Except for this ledge—some thirty feet from the bottom of the canyon—there was hardly a foothold on the face of the nearly perpendicular walls on either side. Suddenly, as they scrambled along the ledge, Miss Clarke stopped with a startled expression on her pretty face.

"Did you hear that?" she asked of her companion.

"I thought I heard a shout or a groan," said Aunt Nelly.

"There it is again," said Miss Clarke. "It comes from the bottom of the canyon."

She peered over the edge of the



Miss Imogen Clarke, Whose Woolen Dress, Cut in Strips, Enabled Her to Rescue a Young Prospector and to Win a Rich Husband.



Balcony House, in the Mesa Verde, Colorado, as Restored to Mark the Last Stand of the Old Cliff Dwellers Against Their Enemies from the Plains.



As Young Leroy Wickes Appeared When On the Journey Which Led Him to the Girl Who Was to Save His Life and Become His Bride.

ledge, with Aunt Nelly holding her firmly by the back breadths of her stout woolen walking skirt.

"It is a man," she said. "He's lying all huddled up at the foot of the cliff. I believe he lost his foothold and fell down the opposite cliff and is seriously injured. There! His head has dropped—he's unconscious!"

"What can we do?" asked Aunt Nelly. "We can't get down there to help the poor fellow, and it will be hours before Andrew returns."

"We must do something," said Miss Clarke. "Without assistance the man may die. Ah, I have it!" And she began to unbutton her woolen dress—which was a substantial affair with bodice and skirt in a single garment. Before Aunt Nelly could realize the girl's purpose, Miss Clarke stood in linen petticoat and under-bodice, with her dress in her hands. More astonishing yet, with her keen-bladed sheath knife she was slashing the strong fabric into strips three or four inches wide.

"Why, Imogen!" exclaimed Aunt Nelly. "What on earth!"

"This woolen cloth is very strong," explained Miss Clarke, as she slashed away at her dress. "Out of these strips we can make a rope

strong enough to bear the weight of a man, and long enough to reach the bottom of the chasm."

In a few minutes the rope was ready. First they lowered a flask of brandy, on the chance that the man might regain consciousness at any moment, refresh himself with a taste of the spirits, and, with their aid, and the rope's reach the ledge. But they soon realized that the sufferer was too badly injured to do anything for himself.

"Aunt Nelly," said the girl, "I'm going down the rope to see what can be done for the poor fellow. You take a turn of the rope around that splinter of rock and hold fast!"

Aunt Nelly was equal to the occasion. The brave girl seized the rope and lowered herself over the ledge. She was strong and possessed of a splendid nerve. Bracing her feet and knees against the face of the cliff, she went down hand over hand, and presently was kneeling beside the injured stranger, with his head in her lap, pouring brandy down his throat.

But now the two women were confronted with a most serious difficulty. The injured man might die if allowed to remain lying on the sun-scorched rocks at the bottom of the canyon until the return of the guide. He was still dazed and was losing much blood from a great gash in his scalp. Miss Clarke shouted these disturbing facts to Aunt Nelly, who shouted back:

"I'm as strong as a man. I'll haul him up and we'll carry him to the camp. Tie the rope firmly about his body under the arms."

They tried it—Aunt Nelly hauling on the rope at the top and Miss Clarke pushing as far up as she could reach from the bottom. But soon Aunt Nelly had to admit that the weight was too great for her, and the sufferer had to be lowered again. Then she suggested something:

"If you can manage to get back to the ledge," he said to Miss Clarke, "I can refasten the rope about me, and perhaps both of you can get me up there." His voice was weak owing to loss of blood.

Aunt Nelly managed to haul Miss

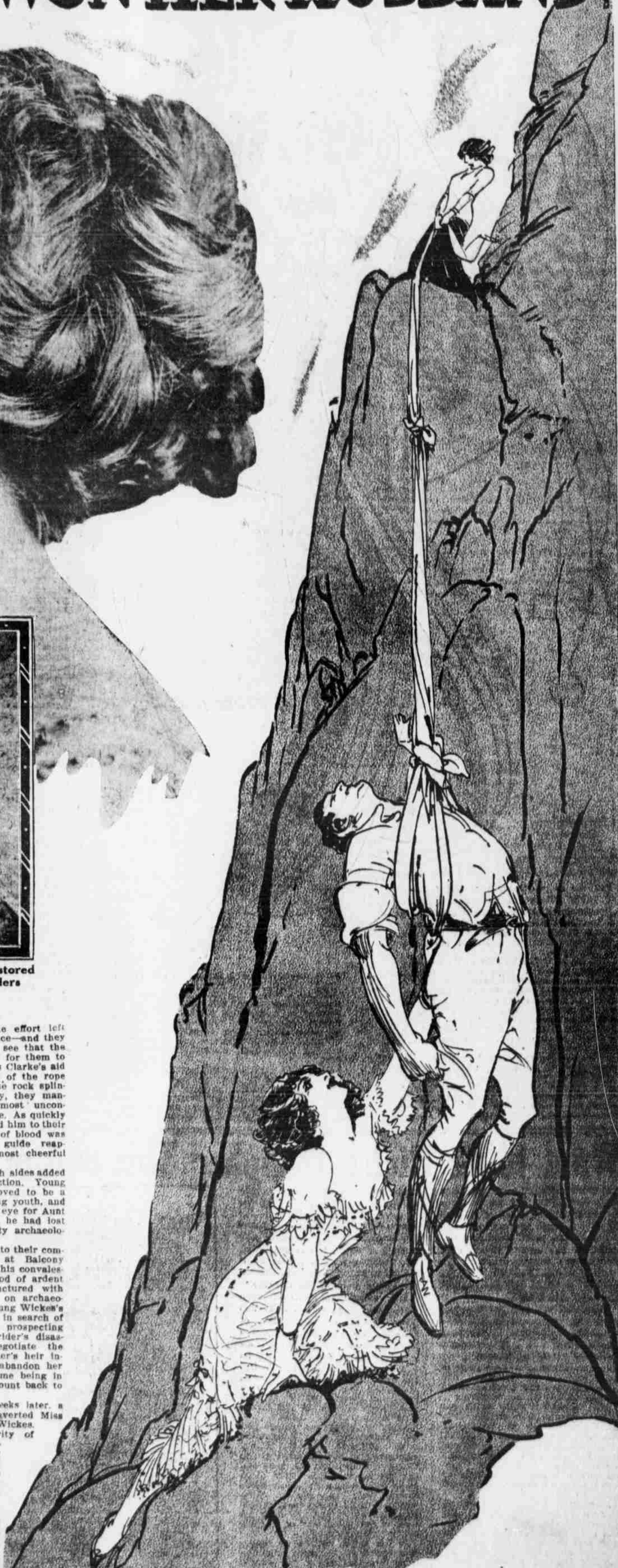
Clarke up—though the effort left her very red in the face—and they were soon relieved to see that the young man was ready for them to haul away. With Miss Clarke's aid

—taking up the slack of the rope with a turn around the rock splinter—slowly, but surely, they managed to raise the almost unconscious man to the ledge. As quickly as possible they carried him to their camp, where the flow of blood was stopped. When the guide reappeared, he was the most cheerful member of the party.

Introductions on both sides added to the general satisfaction. Young Mr. Leroy Wickes proved to be a cultivated and engaging youth, and it needed only half an eye for Aunt Nelly to perceive that he had lost his heart to the pretty archaeologist from the start.

They took him back to their comfortable headquarters at Balcony House. The period of his convalescence was also a period of ardent courtship—slightly tinged with an exchange of views on archaeological matters. As young Wickes' horse had cantered off in search of his comrades in the prospecting party on noting his rider's disastrous attempt to negotiate the chasm, the rich rancher's heir induced Miss Clarke to abandon her explorations for the time being in order to give him a mount back to his home in Pueblo.

In Pueblo, a few weeks later, a wedding ceremony converted Miss Clarke into Mrs. Leroy Wickes. It is in the authority of a relative of that fortunate and happy young man that he has reason to hope that his wife will abandon further original researches in the field of archaeology, her new joys and duties of wifehood having caused her to lose interest in the possibility of the old Cliff Dwellers having a direct ancestry leading back to lost Atlantis.



"Swinging at the End of the Rope Which Miss Clarke Had Made by Slashing Her Dress into Strips, the Unconscious Young Man Was Finally Drawn and Pushed Up to the Ledge."