

Letters from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia in 1903 transcribed for Marcus Bicknell by Giuseppe Sitzia. Rough translations awaiting better.

9 September 2013

September 2, 1903 - Postcard from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia
s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.
To the Rev. Antonio Abate Carestia
Riva Valdobbia - Val Sesia.

Thank you for the beautiful Postcard from the church of Riva.

Bordighera 2 . IX . 1903

Respected and Rev. colleague.

Back home, I am sending you a copy of a book I printed about 15 years ago when I was younger and less wise . Yet when I had less knowledge of plants in Liguria. If I had waited I would not have drawn so many common things , neither made some mistakes . But at least the book has some friends, who do not all [dislike it?] . Later I hope to send you some plants ! Meanwhile, in memory of my three ferns seen by you, likes this addition to his library , along with the gratitude and esteem of devotion.

Clarence Bicknell

My good friend greets you as well.

September 7, 1903 - Postcard from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia
s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.
To the Rev. Abbot Antonio Carestia
Riva Valdobbia - Val Sesia.

Bordighera 7. IX . 1903.

Respected and dear Abbot Carestia

I would ask you to tell me in a few days if the Dianthus, common everywhere in both Alagna and Riva, is *D. Carthusianorum* . I do not know well distinguish this from *D. Atrorubens* , which is perhaps not that variety . All my other plants I have determined without great difficulty , except for an *Oxitropis* from the Col d' Olen – *Oxitropis triflora* Hoppe ; I think that *O. Gaudini* = *O. montana* etc. But quite unlike that of our mountains

With cordial greetings and good wishes [from your devoted friend?]

C. Bicknell .

September 14, 1903 - Letter from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia.
s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.

Bordighera Sept. 14 , 1903.

Rev. Abbot and dear friend .

Back home , however, after a short absence of 3 days in the nearby mountains (where I was fortunate to find a new plant for my book - *Seseli Carvifolium*) , your kind card and the beautiful gift of Lichens of Sesia Valley welcomed me back. My affectionate

thanks for all these. But certainly the book will be dear and precious , although I do not know the lichens .

A few years ago, I considered beginning a study of these [lichens], because certainly those of Liguria are not well known - but I found it too difficult to study without a little help at the beginning , and then I can not work a lot with the microscope , my sight having failed with too much drawing in recent years . Now I look for in my spares if there are some rare or interesting plants which can send to you.

The coming week will leave for London, and I'll be out 3-4 weeks. It is over 2 years that I have not been to England , but now my older sister begs me to come see her . A close relative , in which she had total confidence, has treated her very badly and stolen from her. So I feel sorry to see her, and I have less desire to go where it will be difficult not to meet - Natural history is a real consolation – unless it bites us - some nettle stings or *Rubus* or *Cirsium* (yesterday I picked *Cirsium ferox* - a really fierce plant - but what a beautiful *Cirsium*) but the wounds do not last long , while those given to us by friends leave at the heart an indelible scar - I hope this winter to review the good Lady Lynch and then we 'll talk about you. With a handshake and sincere gratitude, believe me your friend .

C. Bicknell

p.s. But do not bother to write me a long time [as I] do not expect anything more from you.

September 15 (1903? - missing year) - Postcard from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia

s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.

To the Rev. Abbot Antonio Carestia
Riva Valdobbia - Val Sesia. Piedmont

Bordighera Sept 15 .

Respected and dear Friend,

I am sending you today a small package of plants. They are for the most part uncommon plants from us, from me or plants rarely found elsewhere , such as 2 good samples of plants *Cuferaja* (?) , And *Convolvulus sabatius* that certainly you already have there, so it will be no good. But it does not matter because I'll send more as a sign of respect and friendship than anything else - and for the memory of his affectionate and devoted [friend]

Clarence Bicknell .

September 16, 1903 - Postcard from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia

s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.

Dear and respected Reverend Abbot Carestia
Riva Valdobbia - Val Sesia.

Bordighera. 16 . IX . 1903

I will not ship the package for a few days , having thought about adding some of our (?) Autumn plants , such as p . and . *Cyperus aureus and globosus* , *Ti tis dichotoma* and *American Panicum capillary* and *Euphorbia Pushii* which for a very long time are scattered here in large quantities.

With cordial greetings and affection

C. Bicknell

November 30, 1903 - Letter from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia.
s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.

Bordighera 30 Nov. 1903

Dear sir, dear Friend

How good of you to remember me and to write to me. Your letter made me so well. Even yesterday we were almost drowned by the continuous rains , and the cold of new snow on the nearby mountains was felt - so its brought us the light and warmth of memories and friendship. I can not say when the *Azolla Carolina* was shown for the first time in Europe : Paoletti and Flowers say it is naturalized at Chioggia and Ferrara and Tuscany : I found the channels and canals and ditches at Lake Massacuccioli , between Viareggio and Pisa, full of the plant - and I know that has spread to France. It's a beautiful plant to hold in a container of water in the garden. I never studied it, but I know that is very similar to the *Savinea Natanz* . I gratefully accept the kind offer of some of you plant in his region - anything is always gratefully received : and I have nothing from the Val d'Aosta. In Val Sesia and near I picked up last summer *Potent . Grammop* . (thanks to you) , *Eucisa Campanula barbata* , *uniflorus Senecio* , *Gentiana purpurea* , etc. . etc. . I was lucky this fall. In September I discovered (again in my region) *Seseli* (?) *Carvifolium* and 10 days ago '*Juniperus Sabina* , the same. It never ends ! " He who seeks finds ." When I printed my catalog in 1896 that I believed that there was more to come : and after that time I added about 40 species . But we must confess that there is something to be deleted.

Now , dear friend , I would like to wish you good health during the winter - because we are away - and I can not come to see you, if you fall sick , like I would if I were in Alagna. Our pastor is here, a good person, father James (a Franciscan), which is unwise , and then , having made many times the sermons to him, now I do to you the priests preach too much, or at least they should pay more attention to secular sermons , in my opinion - If the church is losing the faithful is because there is too gulf between priests and laity - But my sermon to you is simply to take care of your health, and not to be careless in the cold months - because there are many people that love you.

I hope this winter to see Mrs. Lynch, but I do not know if she plans to come to San Remo.

My good assistant Luigi Pollini , who is now organising my herbarium , sends greetings to you , and I equally with good wishes - and believe me your affectionate Clarence Bicknell

December 17, 1903 - Letter from Clarence Bicknell to Abbot Antonio Carestia.
s.A.S.V. (State Archives Section of Varallo) , Calderini Museum of Varallo , deck 11.

Bordighera December 17, 1903 .

Dear Abbot and generous friend

Yesterday I received your postcard announcement, and today the bundle of plants. But that package ! I do not know exactly what to say to you to thank you , having never received such a rich botanical gift. In addition to the friendly gift to me, which will enrich my own herbarium, you will have lifted the morale of Luigi (Pollini), because he, being younger than me, is more and more impatient, and often whines saying that all we are doing is picking, drying and packing plants for others and we receive little! He almost lost faith in the honesty of the botanical world! But he can now believe again. I always console myself by recalling that "he who gives is more blessed than those who receive" , but he did not. Well this time the blessings are all yours, and do not bring harm to me, because we are truly grateful , and not so much by so many beautiful plants , but the friendship that comes with them. I think of the Song of Deborah (I think) " They (Heber) asked for water , and she brought him milk - even the butter etc. . and so on. " - but after I remember that the woman killed him - and that sure you will not do to me , [having done I raise , as I said in Summer]! So thank you , my good and generous friend and colleague - I have not had time to give more than a glance when it was sent , but I see a lot of very interesting things , and many from the Val Sesia , which I have not seen - and you will be studied for a long time. . I'm fine , and Luigi , as we hope you are. We are having a horrible time , with so much rain - but the roses and carnations in the gardens are a beauty. We recently discovered on our nearby mountains a new plant for our region , *Juniperus Sabina* , which we never thought to see here - so this year I was able to add two plants in my florula : and there is still to discover, secure, even without counting *Rubus* and other rare and difficult species.

We send you many good wishes for the holidays - relatives and friends turn up all the time, but at my age you think more to the empty chairs , and friends who are no longer with us . Be preserved and heal well – and we'll see each other again some day, even down here

Your grateful friend Clarence Bicknell. "

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Antonio Carestia

([Riva Valdobbia, 1825](#) – [Riva Valdobbia, 1908](#)^[1]) was an Italian Abbot and botanist.

He was born, lived most of his life and died in the [Sesia Valley](#) , at the foot of [Monte Rosa](#) and here he realized most of his botanical investigations. This passion inherited from his father the [surgeon](#) who studied botany at the University of Grenoble.

Antonio Carestia entered the [seminary](#) in [Novara](#) , where he took his ecclesiastical studies, before returning to [Riva Valdobbia](#) as [chaplain](#) .

When he wrote "Monograph of the White Horn" in [1869](#) , he was invited as an honorary member of the CAI section.

We deal 'in particular [cryptogamic plants](#) , but also to a lesser extent of [seagrass](#) , studying and collecting species both old and discovering new ones, coming to complete a [herbarium](#) consists of about 25,000 species, between species discoveries stand out the 600 species of [lichens](#) .^[2]

His herbarium was inherited, at first, from the town of Riva Valdobbia, and later by ' [Botanical Garden](#) of [Turin](#) and finally from '*Herbarium Universitatis Taurinensis*. In addition, the Calderini Museum of Natural Sciences in [Varallo](#) , has a collection of 740 sheets.^[3]

At its core was titled [refuge Carestia](#) of [CAI](#) Varallo Sesia, located in [Val Vogna](#) , as well as the Punta Carestia (also known as [Red Horn](#) or Rothorn), a mountain of 2979 meters above sea level located between [Val Sesia](#) and [the Lys Valley](#) .^[4]