

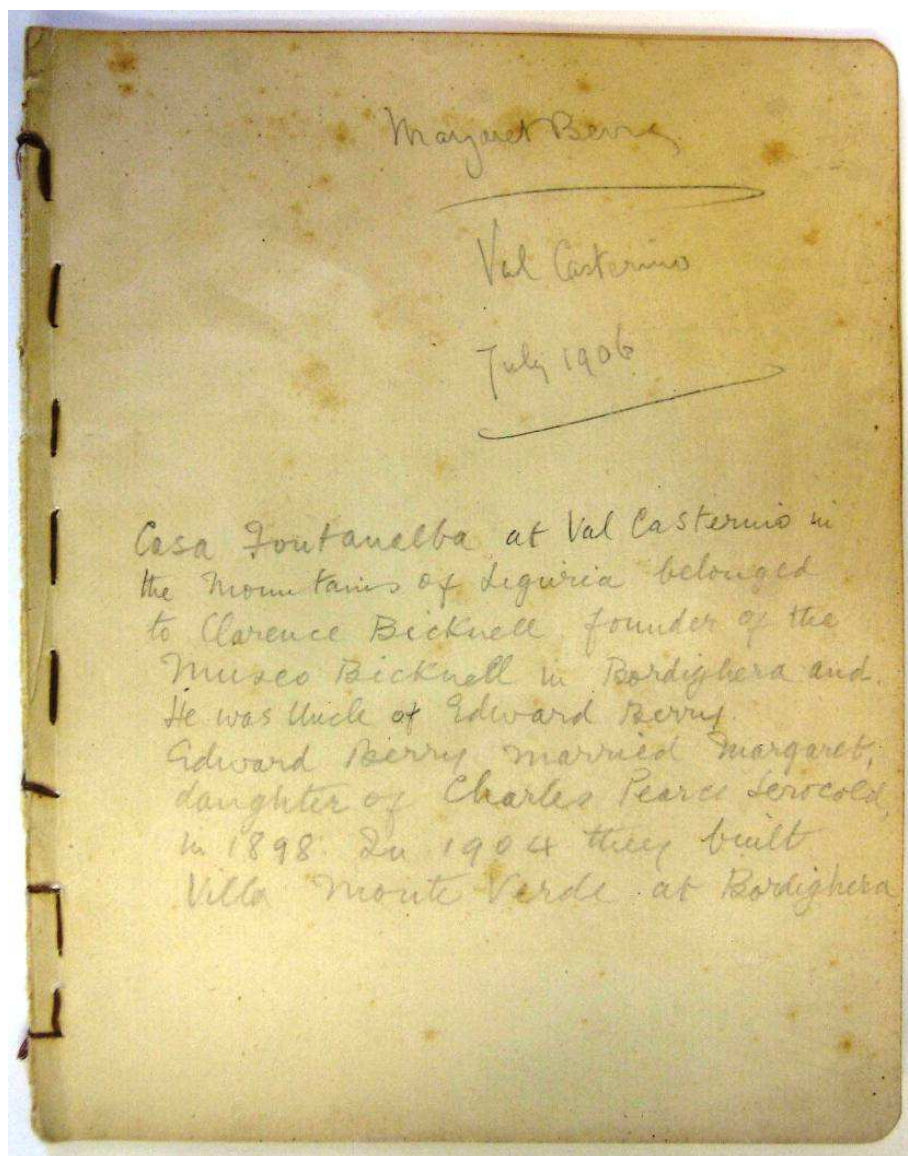
155x197 mm feint lined notebook paper, probably cut or torn from a notebook and stitched by hand (probably by the writer) with brown string or heavy cotton. The right hand corners are rounded. 18 pages written in pencil on both sides.

In this verbatim transcript by Marcus Bicknell 23 May 2014 (revised 2nd and 9th June 2014 with Graham Avery's help) *italics* indicate a word which could not be properly identified. Square brackets indicate a word I have inserted to facilitate reading.

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Margaret Berry Val Casterino - July 1906

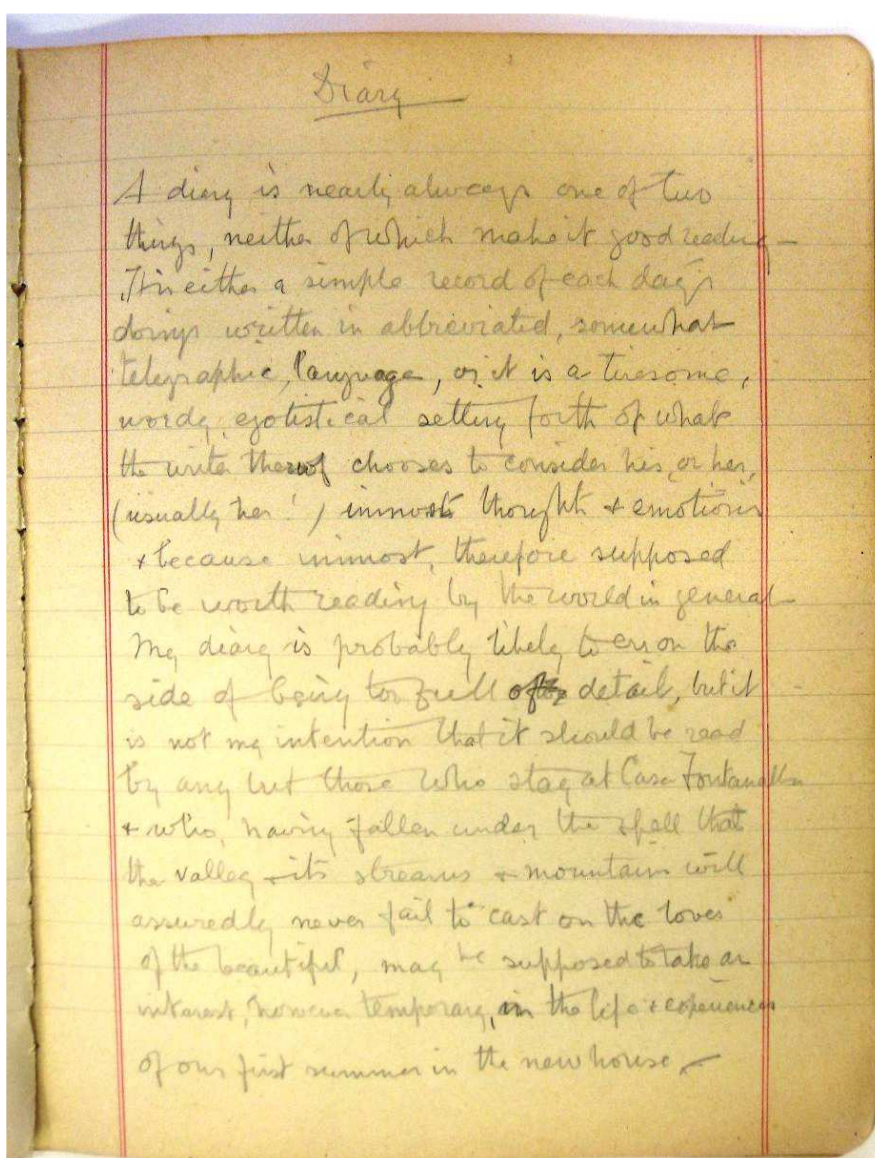


Note on the cover, in a different hand:

Casa Fontanalba at Val Casterino in the mountains of Liguria belonged to Clarence Bicknell founder of the Museo Bicknell in Bordighera and he was uncle of Edward Berry. Edward Berry married Margaret, daughter of Charles Pearce Serrecold in 1898. In 1904 they built villa Monte Verde at Bordighera.

Diary

A diary is nearly always one of two things, neither of which make it good reading. It is either a simple record of each day's doings written in abbreviated, somewhat telegraphic, language, or it is a tiresome, wordy, egotistical setting forth of what the writer thereof chooses to consider his or her (usually her!) inmost thoughts and emotions and because inmost, therefore supposed to be worth reading by the world in general. My diary is probably likely to err on the side of being too full of detail, but it is not my intention that it should be read by any but those who stay at the Casa Fontanalba and who, having fallen under the spell that the Valley, its streams and mountains will assuredly never fail to cast on the lover of the beautiful, may be supposed to take an interest, however temporary, in the life and experiences of our first summer¹ in the new house.



¹ The Berrys went to Casterino with Clarence several times, the first in 1897, but staying elsewhere.

July 6th

Thanksgiving for the heavy rain of the last two days at Bordighera was the predominant feeling in our hearts as we started at 4.30 a.m. on a cloudy morning for our long drive to S. Dalmazzo². Frequently the glorious beauty of that drive is entirely marred by the clouds of dust which envelop one all the way from the coast, and in July it is to be expected, as our showers are usually few and far between May and is till the end of September, and the dust lies 4 or 5 inches deep on the roads all the summer. We considered ourselves therefore most fortunate in having enjoyed two tremendous thunderstorms on the preceding days which had completely laid the dust and freshened up the grass and washed the leaves, so that the valley stones glittered in the early morning sunshine, after the cloud and haze of daybreak had melted away, raindrops shimmered on the oleanders, now in full bloom on the hillside and in the river bed. Further up the valley where the water is so abundant, the chestnuts, the sumach³ and the luxuriant rich grass gave us that first unequalled pleasure which intense greenness and running streams and torrents give to the dwellers in a sun scorched dried up land where water is tepid and costly and grass is almost unknown.

I shall probably be told that I am exaggerating wildly for sake of filling up my book, and drawing a picturesque comparison between San Dalmazzo and Bordighera, but if anyone doubts my statement will they come to see for themselves and judge whether a temperature in one's house which varies only from 80° to 86° is likely to produce much verdure in one's garden or to make the water otherwise than hot! Such details as breakfast and douanes⁴ and lunch at S. Dalmazzo I merely pass over and come now to the serious business of the day which began about 3.15 when we left our nearest point of civilisation, and Mme Angst's⁵ house at S. Dalmazzo.

I mounted my large *vim*-grey⁶ mule while two others were loaded with luggage and chairs, tomatoes and pottery, hams and boots, and various requisites for a sojourn in the remote mountain place we have chosen for our "villegiatura". Edward⁷ and Maddalena⁸ walked and were very hot all the time, and many a time I rejoiced in my easy mode of ascent and thanked heaven for inventing such a strong and surefooted beast as a mule who minds not how steep or rough the path is and is even able and willing to carry my weight up a mountain.

² Today in France and called St. Dalmas de Tende

³ Sumacs are shrubs and small trees that can reach a height of 1–10 metres, of the genus *Rhus* and related genera. The name is from the Arabic for "red".

⁴ Travellers from Bordighera (in Italy) to San Dalmazzo (then in Italy, now St Dalmas-de-Tende in France) had to pass customs posts (douanes) twice, since the lower part of the Roya valley was in France. See Note A at the end.

⁵ There was a Hotel Angst in Bordighera, frequented by the rich international set. Source: Mario Mercenario "Bordighera e il Museo-Biblioteca..." etc. IISL 1998.

⁶ This unusual descriptive of a colour could indeed be inspired by the Vim cleaning powder. If so, Margaret Berry was a lady who stayed on top of the latest developments: Vim arrived on the market in 1904. The manuscript word could conceivably be "vion".

⁷ Margaret writes Edward as "E" throughout and Clarence as "C".

⁸ Casterino was known as La Maddalena, but this person (presumably a female) is not, to my knowledge, referred to in any other documentation about Clarence Bicknell and the Berrys (MB 2014).

Now I must speak about Casa Fontanalba which is a most charming little cottage built last summer by the Uncle⁹ in a secluded position behind larch trees, on the slope of the hills facing east with a view up and down the valley and up to the Rocca d'Abysso¹⁰ and Paracouerte¹¹ and down into blueness and large trees to where the fold upon fold of the protecting mountains at last closed the valley to our sight. We arrived at our destination soon after six o'clock and were welcomed by the Uncle and the household consisting of Mahdi¹², Luigi and Mercede¹³. Our coachman, Ronaldo, left his horses and carriage with a "garzone"¹⁴ at Tenda and came up with us for the night for sheer love of the mountains and perhaps a little curiosity to see the Uncle's new palazzo. He slept on a "branda"¹⁵ in the sitting room and seems to have gone through it onto the floor during the night. The Uncle also suffered from Rolando's visit as one of his blankets was taken to give to the uninvited guest and he shivered all night in consequence. N.B. we must have a proper mattress made for the branda and we must get some more blankets and perhaps we had better not ask people to stay without notice.

A good supper and an early bed finished the day-but that which happened in the night was not discovered until next day so belongs to the experiences of July 7th.

July 7th

I did not sleep very well, but no special reason that I could discover till daybreak showed me the cause. A large number of small crawling insects were on my blanket and sheet and as fast as I slaughtered those eyesore, more appeared until I was quite sick with disgust and dismay. Mercede and Luigi were called to my defence and the animals were pronounced "cinisie"¹⁶ or bugs!! Why they had not bitten me I do not understand for I am usually a popular victim to most things that bite and sting, but I had mercifully escaped. How do battle with the foe was the next question and stringent measures were at once decided on. The beds were of iron with chain mattress and straw mattress and "capoque" mattress on top, all perfectly new. It was indignantly denied that the beast could be in the two latter whose making had been supervised at home, but the iron bedstead was immediately accused of harbouring the foe. The beds were taken down in a twinkling and Luigi spent the morning making them undergo first the ordeal by fire and then the ordeal by water and corrosive sublimate and it was generally acknowledged that not even a bug could survive the process. In the meantime all the rest of the bedding was thoroughly examined and cleansed and no more has been heard of the plague of insects. This is still a mystery however a large family of bugs could exist in a chain mattress on iron bedstead.

⁹ Clarence Bicknell

¹⁰ Normally spelt *Abisso* (Italian)

¹¹ Paracouerte (2385m) is west northwest of Casterino above the Lac des Grenouilles

¹² Clarence's dog, identified in Clarence's book of guests at the Casa Fontanalba, in Esperanto!

¹³ Margaret and Edward Berry are the first outsiders to sign Clarence's illuminated Casa Fontanalba visitors book; they show their dates as 6-23 July 1906. The three signatures before them are Clarence Bicknell, Luigi Pollini and Mercede Pollini on 16 June 1906 which is therefore the date of first habitation. Pollini and his wife do not sign the book again although they are probably there with Clarence every year till his death in 1918.

¹⁴ Equivalent to the English use of "a lad" or even French "garçon".

¹⁵ A camp-bed (Italian).

¹⁶ Spelling *sic*. "Cimice" (plural) is Italian for bed bugs.

This morning we walked round the property with the uncle who is justly pleased and proud of his new possession. It is a most perfect spot with a river all our own running just behind the house and 210 different plants growing in the garden. The garden consists of rocks and turf with flowers and ferns growing in every cranny and it is the uncle's intention to introduce other plants from the neighbourhood not found actually on the property, till we gradually get together quite a unique Alpine garden.

There is much to do at present in clearing up the rubbish and mess left by the builders and we began today to move the sand which is in a large heap in a most prominent position to a less visible corner. That was chiefly Edward's work and he wielded the immense shovel (or spoon as we call it!) and carried baskets of sand about like a regular day labourer, only he got tired rather sooner and so would hardly have earned his 2.50. My work is to chip off the caked lumps of lime from the ground and rocks where the mortar was mixed, as we have decided that no plant can be expected to grow through that hard crust. We worked till we were tired and then came into change, had supper and then to bed.

July 8th

Sunday - but very difficult to realise that it is Sunday. We started about 8 o'clock up the hill behind the house and went up Val Fontanalba to look for flowers. The uncle's description of the flowers and the specimens he had brought home to dry had excited us beyond measure and it was to see the blue columbines (*Aquilegia alpina*) that we started off today. The glory of flowers which greeted us is quite beyond my description but the woods were blue with Columbine in great patches as they are blue with wild hyacinth at home, and the bare streaks of scree and rough stones were shining with the golden Alpine Poppy. *Anemone Narcissiflora*¹⁷ was still out here and there and yellow *Trollius* was to be found on all sides. We turned up the hillside after we had followed the Lago Verde path for some time and got to a great patch of snow where the dogs, Mahdi and Rob¹⁸ disported themselves with much joy.

In the snow we found a few belated crocuses, plenty of *Soldanella*, that little fringed *many* flower that only grows in the snow, a few specimens of *Primula intricata*, a lovely yellow flower much like our cowslips at home, only paler in colour and a tiny little *Androsace*¹⁹ and some *Ranunculus Pyreneus*²⁰. Further on along the hill side, for we returned on the high level and scrambled down when we got to the big rocks below *Ciavraireo*²¹, we found numerous other lovely flowers which excited our interest and admiration and also we had the good luck to see for chamois quite close to us; three of them took fright at once and scampered down the hill with Rob after them (!) and the fourth stood for quite a minute and watched as only about 20 yards away and then turned up again to the rocks whence it had come and I saw it jumping and galloping away far over our heads.

¹⁷ Spelling *sic*; Margaret gets the spelling "*Anemone narcissiflora*" correct on July 9th paragraph 3.

¹⁸ Rob is the Berrys' dog. Source: Clarence's VIP book in Esperanto has a page on him – "Robber. The black dog of my niece, was so called because he was young [and] he often stole, but now he is discouraged and completely converted to the path of honesty."

¹⁹ Spelling *sic*. *Androsace* is correct although there are some web references with double "s".

²⁰ Spelling *sic*; *pyrenaicus* is correct

²¹ *Cima Ciavraireo* (2350 m.) is a peak between the Miniera and Fontanaiba valleys

In a shady dell we came upon such a patch of blue aquilegia as I shall never forget and E could not resist plunging down into its depths and picking me a large bunch. It is not only the colour and shape of these exquisite flowers that fill one with delight, but their buds, their leaves, their growth are all so perfect and graceful that to my mind they quite hold the palm among all wild flowers that I know.

After that we wanted to work away again at our lime pit and sand heap but suddenly remembered that it was Sunday²² so consoled ourselves by planting little plants we had brought in the morning from Val Fontanalba, and E and uncle C went down to see the Pig²³.

We spend all our time, when at home, and the delightful large terrace in front of the house. There is a balcony round the bedroom floor too so this forms a roof to sit under on the terrace below and keeps off the glare of the sun. It also serves as a shelter from the rain which is fairly frequent as it always is in mountain places, and as, according to true Val Casterino tradition, we invariably sit outdoors whatever the weather may be - it is rather a comfort to be able to continue to do so and not get wet. We have all our meals out on the terrace, and it is only in the morning when the sun is very powerful and pours on to the front of the house that we are obliged to sit inside for an hour or two. The rooms of Casa Fontanalba had been decorated by the uncle in his own original and inimitable manner. The sitting room has a frieze of Mountain Ash berries and leaves, the stems of the trees coming in straight lines down to the floor and forming panels on the walls. Over each door and window is a figure from the prehistoric rock drawings. The servant's sitting room has medallions at intervals all round the frieze, each one containing a different mountain plant with its name. These medallions are connected by intertwined ribbons or lines festooned from one to the other. In our bedroom the frieze represents mountain fir trees and rivers, all in green and blue with pale blue walls and green cretonne bedcovers and curtain to the wardrobe. All is so fresh and pretty that I already have got to love my room and its soft harmonious colouring.

July 9th

A new table and a new bookcase have arrived today, and the library which seemed so very large when spread about on the tables seems sadly inadequate to fill the two shelves. No doubt in time we shall get together a small collection of books to keep up here as it is a serious matter carrying such heavy things up and down the long way to S. Dalmazzo unnecessarily.

The uncle and Luigi went off at 6.30 to Lago Verde to do some rubbings of the rock inscriptions, and Edward and I, regardless of the threatening weather and faithfully trusting in the uncle's assertion that it never rains till after midday, started about 7.30 for Pian Tendasco to search for fritillaries. The uncle had found some about a fortnight ago and had shown us his dried specimens but we were most anxious to find some ourselves.

²² The implication is that their religion forbade them from manual labour except that they were able to plant flowers.

²³ I have no knowledge of a pig at Casterino (MB).

Up, up, up and we went, always uphill, without any “hospital ground²⁴”, first over grassy meadows cropped close by the cows, with occasional larches and big rocks strewn over the ground; then through wood where the plants grew thick and more luxuriant, to near an abandoned “mayheria²⁵” the rank vegetation of dock, nettle and other coarse growing plants, came up to my waist and I could hardly make my way through.

It had poured with rain every afternoon lately so wading through this saturated jungle of verdure soaked me through and made my shirt into a clinging rag. At last we reached the Pian and then found quantities of an *Anemone narcissiflora* and a few yellow tulips (*T. australis*) which we mistook for fritillaries in our ignorance, but not a single one of the rare flowers we had come to seek was visible. Evidently they were all over, and we were too late in the season. It was bitterly cold up on the height and the black clouds were gathering to the north and coming so fast over us that every moment I expected a downpour. We had a hurried lunch, almost shivering with cold and enjoyed a view of *Marta*²⁶ and *Baracone di Maiter*²⁷ of Saccarello and our friend and neighbour Toraggio²⁸ in the distance. It seemed impossible to realise that just on the other side of that mountain (with its rugged profile of Napoleon pointing to the sky) it was blazing hot and that a pitiless sun poured down on the unfortunate mortals and gardens who were obliged to stay there while we were almost too cold up on a mountainous ridge only about 25 miles away.

The freshness and keenness of the air are really wonderful considering the very short distances²⁹ Val Casterino is from the coast, where we know by experience that the heat is excessive in July and August, but I ask nothing better than these mountain breezes and cool nights as a tonic to get us up again after a Bordighera summer. This long digression was caused by the sight of Toraggio, but I was not able long to meditate upon Pian Tendasco, for a loud clap of thunder was quickly followed by torrents of rain and hail and we were soon drenched to the skin as there was no use in taking shelter and we thought it wise to keep warm walking than get thoroughly chilled sitting under a tree on the chance of its not lasting long.

Happily we were only about an hour from home and by taking a very steep gully as our line we soon found ourselves on a good path down which they bring the wood and would soon led us homewards. We found that the soldiers had already arrived and were setting up their tents³⁰. The poor men seemed like half drowned ants moving about below us all so tiny and looking so small at that distance beneath where we stood. The rain soon ceased and we had a fine evening and we were able to work at our lime and sand once more till supper time.

²⁴ “Hospital ground” must mean a flat part of the hill to make for easier walking. Would it have been so called because the military could pitch hospital beds here? Or because the walkers could get their breath back? It could be imagined Margaret meant to write “hospitable ground” but she clearly puts the two words in quotation marks to show it’s a less-known expression.

²⁵ Malgheria is Italian for a dairy farm. Clarence Bicknell used this word, spelt correctly, in his book “Prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps” (1902).

²⁶ If Marta is a mountain, I have not been able to find any reference to it, nor similar spellings. If Marta is Marta Pellegrino mentioned on the next page, then it’s surprising Margaret had not mentioned she had come up the mountains with them. “Enjoyed a view of Marta” would also imply that she was sitting some way away from Margaret and Edward.

²⁷ No mountain found with this name. Baracone means a “big shed” in Italian so it could be a mountain name.

²⁸ Monte Toraggio (1,971 m “Turage” in Ligurian) is on the border between Italy and France south of Breil – La Briga). From its peak you can see the beaches of Bordighera and San Remo.

²⁹ Spelling *sic*, plural.

³⁰ The soldiers did not sign the Casa Fontanalba visitors book so they were not guests there and must have been camping on open ground in the Val Casterino. Officers of the Italian army sign Clarence’s illuminated visitors book in 1908

July 10th

We had an idle day and did not leave the property except to call on Marta Pellegrino³¹ and to look at Mr Churchman's new home³² on the hill to the north of us. They have got the foundation in and the walls are about 2ft high. I wrote letters all the morning and mended Edward's and my clothes and read George³³ Borrow's "Bible in Spain" which interests me much tho' not so much as "Lavengro" and "Romany Rye". I did not work much in the garden as I am stiff and my hand hurts me rather, but Edward and Luigi moved huge stones to make a path by the side of the river and to keep the soil up from falling into the water. They were busy there for some hours and I was tired after it. Uncle C filled up some of the holes between the rocks which we had cleared out the broken rubbish from, with good soil, and these places are now ready for planting.

We saw a fight in the evening down at Pellegrino's. A man and a woman seem to have started abusing Marta at the gate and the Pig arriving in the middle of the discussion was attacked by the man with his fist and by the woman with a stick and thrown on the ground. The officers and soldiers nearby interfered and the man and woman walked on to Sta. Maria Madalena which is said to belong to them. It was some question about the ownership of the land on which Pellegrino's house stands which was the cause of the quarrel, we hear, and this man lays claim to it.

July 11th

Uncle Clarence, Edward and Luigi went up to Lago Verde to do some more rubbings. They took both dogs with them. Caterina says she cannot supply us with milk after today so Madalena³⁴ and Mercede went up to find out if one of the "mayherie"³⁵ can do so, and they have found one man who has 15 cows, not far up the valley, who will undertake to send it every evening to us. Pellegrini has gone down to Tenda to get "*guistizia*" about his attack last night. I spent a quiet day, reading, writing and working. The men came in about 4 o'clock and worked in the garden till dinner time.

July 12th

A quiet day for us all, writing reading and working. Uncle Clarence and Edward did a good bit work in the garden. Mercede washed in river and I sat by her. Three soldiers washed close by. The sofa of the sitting room and linen cupboard arrived.

This evening thunderstorm with hail and heavy rain. Glass down to 45° on terrace and to 52° in our room.

³¹ Signor Pellegrino of Tenda owned a house in Val Casterino where he lodged visitors: Clarence's friend Fritz Mader stayed there in September 1892, and Clarence stayed there in the summers of 1897, 1898, 1901 and 1902, until it was sold. The building, later enlarged, is now the Auberge Val Castérino.

³² James Churchman (wife Elizabeth) was Vice-consul of Menton and proprietor of three hotels in Menton - the Belle Vue, Italie and Grande Bretagne.

³³ George Henry Borrow (5 July 1803 – 26 July 1881) was an English author who wrote novels and travelogues based on his experiences travelling around Europe. Over the course of his wanderings, he developed a close affinity with the Romani people of Europe, who figure prominently in his work. His best known books are *The Bible in Spain*, the autobiographical *Lavengro*, and *The Romany Rye*, about his time with the English *Romanichal* (gypsies)

³⁴ Identity of Madalena not known (MB).

³⁵ "Malgherie" is Italian for dairy farms.

July 13th

Clarence and Edward walked up Val Valmasca as far as the Marchise's³⁶ shooting baracca³⁷ (2 hours and 5 mins). Brought back some is sods with *Gentiana rostani*, *pinguicula*, ferns etc. for the garden. Also Edward brought a beautiful bunch of *Lilium Croceum* the orange lily. Finest specimens than I have seen yet. We all worked in garden after tea. Just in balcony all the morning and mended clothes.

July 14th

Edward and I walked up to Fontanalba [, the] first mayheria by [the] opposite bank of river, crossed over above bridge by stepping stones, and picked flowers and dug roots and sods for garden, coming home down by our usual steep path on right bank of river behind house. After lunch we dug some sods and placed them near the south-west corner of house, also some tufts of ferns and *sempervivums*. The builders of the house, Zanteri, came up to see uncle Clarence. This morning Mr Churchman was up here to see his building, but we only saw him in the distance.

Edward and uncle Clarence went down to call on major commanding Italian in camp and invited him up here one day. He was most polite and promised to send soldiers at any time we wished to go for our walks to see us through the "periculous zone" "when they were shooting".

I did a great deal of embroidery and wrote two letters (Mme Angst and Miss *Godura*) Edward's nailed boots arrived from home. Mahdi³⁸ was given a doll to play with and then Clarence and Luigi threw it from one to the other for a long time while Mahdi rushed backwards and forwards between the two.

Sunday 15th July

We got up at 5.30 and breakfasted at 6.15. Uncle Clarence and Luigi started first at 6.30 and we started at 6.45. We saw our first "German tourists" while we were at breakfast, (a man with a white straw hat and a stick) and it is only this evening that uncle Clarence has remembered that he is the boss of the white cows who had probably come to claim compensation from the soldiers for the damage done by their camp to his grazing ground for the cows.

Edward took several photos on the way up. I walked on slowly by myself. We crossed the river at middle mayheria and went up very steeply between rocks and over rough grassy places to Via Sacra (4 trunk larch at entrance) having several rests on the way. At top of Via Sacra we divided, Edward going down to the two small lakes to photograph and I keeping up by a tall black wall of rocks dripping with water and passing immediately to the left of it up [a] cow path.

³⁶ Count Guido d'Alberti della Briga owned the land and gave Clarence the right to build the Casa Fontanalba on the condition that the house reverts to the d'Alberti family at Clarence's death. The Berrys were allowed to keep it going till they went back to England in the 1920s. The d'Alberti family still owns the land and the house now in 2014.

³⁷ Italian; hut, shed or cabin

³⁸ Mahdi was Clarence's dog. Source: Clarence's VIP book and photographs.

We met close by Skin Hill again where we rested for a while as we saw the uncle's alpenstock a little further on as a signal³⁹ that he was near. At 11, the appointed hour for lunch, we went up there and lunched with uncle and Luigi on Skin Hill near a stream of deliciously fresh water. We stayed there for half an hour after lunch while uncle and Luigi went off to do some more rubbings.

At 12.45 we left lunch place and climbed over a very nasty place to get across a gully, went over Armour Rock and Castle Rock and then scrambled and climbed over rocks and round corners down a rocky chimney where I had to be helped by Edward letting myself down high rocks as best I could, climbing on hands and knees up steep rocky places, sliding across a broad smooth rocky surfaces, right across [the] Great Central Grey Mass - waited a long while for uncle who had difficulty in getting down cliff where we slid down chimney and had to try several places before he could get down. At last he came and took us down by a stunted large tree to Three Hundred Rocks and Tapestry Rock where I sat under a shady rock to rest while Edward went to examine Three Hundred Rocks and uncle to find a drawing of a skin he had mislaid.

We went on to the stream above Lago Verde where we drank lovely fresh water and rested till Edward joined us. He and I left them⁴⁰ there at 3.10 and went slowly home arriving at 4.45. I was very tired and footsore after my long day out but I have had a good dinner and I was very hungry and thirsty and am now going to bed.

Lago Verde looked most lovely today, the water is so green and transparent and the lights and shades of afternoon sun so clear and beautiful. It was very hot on the rocks and I am dreadfully sunburnt with the reflected glare on my face.

July 16th

An off day – [we] rested from our labours of yesterday, wrote letters, worked etc. In the afternoon Edward and I dug turf and flower sods for the garden. The gentiana Rostani and sempervivum arachnoides which we transplanted last week, are doing very well and flowering quite happily. A soldier was wounded this morning by one of the guns bursting. It was a marvellous escape it was a wonder that several men were not killed. The soldier was slightly wounded in the arms.

The uncle and Edward walked up to the big rocks with caves on the east side of the valley to look for *Phyteuma Baldensis*, a rare plant.

³⁹ We can learn from this that Clarence left his alpenstock (his long mountain walking stick) on the path when he went off it for the purpose of taking a copy of an engraving or drawing a flower. This must have been to indicate to Luigi where he was and for safety purposes, to let others find him if he failed to return.

⁴⁰ We assume "them" would be Clarence and Luigi.

July 17th

Edward and I went up Ciagiore⁴¹, starting at 6:15 a.m. We walked across meadows dripping with morning dew, as far as the soldiers' new bridge and up by the lime kiln and the new path,. We reached the military road in 1 hour 40 mins; the last part after we left the path is very steep. However that was nothing compared to the steepness of the hill afterwards when I could only take about six steps and then stop. We went up rough grass and shale at first then got into the rhododendron scrub and at last in 2 hrs 55 mins reached the top. (Edward had to pull me out by his stick the last part). There was no view alas from the top, as the clouds had gathered in the last hour or two, though it was quite clear when we started. We searched everywhere for Gregoria, a sort of small yellow primula which the uncle said we ought to find there, but came to the conclusion that it is not out yet. We came down by way of the rocks to the Baissa di Urno where was the flowering meadow you well can imagine; many of yellow Trollium on one side where the grass was long and quantities of orchids of various kinds, of which the brilliant *patch* of the Nigritella was most vivid, on the other side where the cows had eaten the grass.

We lunched at the top of the larch wood near a carpet of forget-me-nots, but we could not stay there long as the flies were too troublesome and eventually drove us away. We came down by a very rough stone path through a steep larch wood and arrived at the valley just opposite the mayheria. Reached home 1.45. Worked in the garden after tea. Our ugly bare corner is getting on and the tulip and ferns we have planted all thriving so far. We water them diligently every evening. I hope much that by next year it will all look green and natural. The uncle and Luigi have been up to the rocks all day and came in at 6.30 very tired and hot. They have found three new drawings so are much pleased with their day's work. It is wonderful to see the uncle's keen interest and marvellous energy about the rock drawings. It is a walk of one and three-quarter hours before he reaches the beginning of these rocks and then he spends all day clambering and climbing about on and lying on his face at full length for hours rubbing the design with healball⁴² on large sheets of paper. He rubs till his nails are all worn down and his hands burned nearly black with the sun, and cracked and split by the incessant work. When he comes home he goes through all the drawings he has done and dates them, locates them as best he can. Then writes an elaborate diary with full description of his day's work illustrated with small designs of the new drawings he has found.

⁴¹ Monte Ciagiore (2,318m)

⁴² Mis-spelling of heel ball. The name "Heel ball" dates back to the earliest days of Brass Rubbing, in the Victorian era, when the wax that was used was often Cobblers "heel ball", a stiff wax used by cobblers to colour the heel of new shoes. To rub brasses or horizontal rock engravings "Hold the heelball fairly flat in one hand and with the other hand make an L shape by stretching out the thumb and laying the palm flat on the paper. By rubbing within the outstretched hand it is easier to control the length of the strokes. Try to rub in one direction only (preferably up and down, following the main lines of the engraving) and aim for an even finish."

July 18th

We spent the day at home, occupied in the usual way - gardening good deal - writing letters, doing my embroidery. Luigi is making a woodshed behind the house. A man brought down two live hens from Valmasca to sell as he says that a "long beast which flies" has been several times and killed his fowls and he wants to get rid of them before they are all taken.

July 19th

Another quiet day. After tea Edward and I walked up the valley a little way and dug ferns, chiefly Paisley fern, which does not grow wild in the garden, and looked most unsuccessfully for fungi and puffballs which are usually found in those meadows in quantities.

July 20th

My Festa - St Margaret's Day. Capt Lucas⁴³ appeared at 7.15 to breakfast having walked up in two and a quarter hours from S. Dalmazzo where he is spending the summer at the new hotel with his sister and children at the convent close by. He came and dug sods and ferns with Edward and me and we have almost covered up our ugly corner now and made it look quite pretty and flowery and green. One large sod full of little pinks continues to flower as if it had never been moved and the daisies I planted this morning in honour of St Margaret looked perfectly fresh.

We watched the shells which the artillery were firing from the col between Ciagiore and Sabrone, bursting on the grassy face of Pierafica just above and below the military road.

After tea, about four o'clock, Captain Lucas went off to walk down again and we planted some more things and tidied up generally. The battalion of Alpine who are encamped just across the river have a band which plays every evening after dinner. We have had quite a hot day; glass at 70° in our room.

July 21st

Edward and the uncle went off at 6.15 with Luigi and the two dogs to go to the rocks. At the plateau on the left bank of the stream immediately above us they came upon a company of Alpini who were just beginning to shoot and were stopped by a soldier and taken to the colonel who most politely agreed to stop shooting for half an hour till they were safely past the "periculous zone"! They were out till 5.30 and came back very tired and awfully sunburnt, Edward being burned on his shoulders and arms through his shirt. They all went and bathed in the river and after drink of vermouth and a change of clothes sat down gladly in long chairs to rest till dinner.

⁴³ Lucas signs the visitors book on 2nd August so he must have come more than once.

After dinner the band played close to Pellegrino's house in honour of the artillery officers who were at mess in a tent close by and some of whom are leaving tomorrow. We quite enjoyed the music which went on till after I was in bed, 9:30 p.m. I had been very quiet all day, writing letters for over three hours in the morning and reading and doing embroidery all afternoon. I have just begun to make the steps on the left of my⁴⁴ garden, to prevent the careless from walking over my newly planted ferns etc. We bought a red legged partridge today from an old woman for 1.50.

Edward found his spiral rock again much to his satisfaction and took another rubbing of the design of the spiral. The uncle had never been able to find it where Edward rubbed it 3 years ago, and showed some doubt as to its existence!!

A very hot day. The hottest we have yet had. Glass at 72° in my room at midday. Had to take a blanket off my bed.

Sunday July 22nd

Madalena's Festa. The soldiers have been shooting little mortars in the field near Sta Maria Madalena⁴⁵ in honour of the Festa, and also fired off a few great big shots which made the house ...

The diary ends here; a page must be missing. Margaret and Edward left the Casa Fontanalba on the 23rd of July, one day later. They were regular visitors till Clarence's death in 1918 and looked after the house for about 8 years after that.

⁴⁴ Earlier in the diary Margaret says "our" garden of the plot round the Casa Fontanalba. Here she says "my" garden either out of possessiveness (she was very close to Clarence as well as to her husband Edward) or because part of the garden was tended and planted by her alone.

⁴⁵ Spelling *sic*. Italian for the saint and a first name is Maddalena. The modern village of Casterino was then known as La Maddalena because of its chapel dedicated to the saint.

Sources and notes (with thanks to Graham Avery)

Note A

Fritz Mader, Les Inscriptions Préhistoriques des Environs de Tende, Annales de la Société Des Lettres, Sciences & Arts des Alpes-Maritimes, Tome XVIII, Nice, 1903

« On se rend de Nice à Saint-Dalmas, soit par la route nationale qui passe à l'Escarène et à Sospel (trajet fort long, en somme peu recommandable; la diligence met 14 heures à couvrir les 76 kilomètres qu'il comporte; à cause des deux grandes montées du Col de Braus et du Col de Brouis); soit en prenant le chemin de fer jusqu'à Vintimille, d'où une bonne route remonte la Roya pour s'unir à la précédente au hameau de la Giandola. Ce dernier trajet ne comporte que 42 kilomètres (environ 4 à 5 heures en voiture), mais il présente un petit inconvénient : c'est qu'il faut passer trois douanes, la partie moyenne de la vallée étant française »

Note B

Fritz Mader, Escursioni e studi nelle Alpi Marittime, in Bollettino del Club Alpino Italiano 1895-1896. Vol. XXIX, Nr. 62

« il 12 settembre [1892], in compagnia del sig. P. Salvi, risalii con bellissimo tempo la Valle della Miniera, pernottando, dopo una breve gita al Lago di Fontanalba, nella bella casa del signor Pellegrino in Val Casterino, nella località segnata sulla carta col nome di S. Maria Maddalena »

(On the 12th September 1892, in the company of Signor P. Salvi, I walked up the Miniera valley in excellent weather, and after a brief pause at Lago Casterino spent the night at the fine house of Signor Pellegrino in Val Casterino at the place described on the map as S. Maria Maddalena)

Note C

Fritz Mader, Les Inscriptions Préhistoriques des Environs de Tende, Annales de la Société Des Lettres, Sciences & Arts des Alpes-Maritimes, Tome XVIII, Nice, 1903

« Récemment, un savant botaniste anglais, M. Clarence Bicknell, établi à Bordighera, où il a fondé un musée public avec bibliothèque gratuite et une salle de conférences, séjourna pendant trois étés (1897, 1898 et 1901) à la maison Pellegrino, dans le Val de Casterino ; quand je lui eus indiqué les inscriptions du Vallon de Fontanalba qu'il ne connaissait pas encore, il se mit à les étudier et finit par en calquer environ 650 »

See also Clarence Bicknell, The prehistoric rock engravings in the Italian Maritime Alps (1902)

'Val Fontanalba was forgotten till we ourselves went to spend the summer there in 1897... I had heard of [the Meraviglie] soon after coming to winter in Bordighera in 1879, and two years later I walked up there with a friend from San Dalmazzo... there was so much snow... that we saw very little. In September of 1885 I went again... and made about 50 drawings... and in 1897 I determined to go again. I wrote about the end of July to the Secretary of the Italian Alpine Club for information about the works already published on the Meraviglie, and he referred me to Dr. Fritz Mader, an Associate who had a thorough knowledge of the Maritime Alps and who spent his summers in Tenda. It was then, through the full and courteous reply to a letter that I wrote to Dr. Mader, that we first heard of there being inscriptions in the valley near us, and we immediately went up to search for ourselves'