



MARVELS

THE LIFE OF

Clarence Dickinson







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THE LIFE OF CLARENCE BICKNELL

Botanist, Archaeologist, Artist

Valerie Lester



MATADOR





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FRONTISPIECE: Outside the Casa Fontanalba, left to right: Marco Novello, Clarence Bicknell, Capitano Alberto Pelloux, Signora Bianca Pelloux, Luigi Pelloux. All four guests signed the *Casa Fontanalba Visitors' Book* on 12 August 1913.





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PROLOGUE

WHEN CLARENCE BICKNELL WAS BORN in 1842, Queen Victoria was 23 years old, had been on the throne for five years, and already had two children. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing in Britain; the emergence of steam power, factory production, and a modern capitalist economy caused a decline in workers' living standards but fabulous wealth for others, among them Clarence's father Elhanan. The Mines Act of 1842 prohibited underground work for women and for boys under ten years old. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's tunnel under the Thames was completed; he had already run the Great Western Railway to Bristol; and was a few months from the launch of the world's biggest ship, the *SS Great Britain*. J. M. W. Turner had just exhibited *Snow Storm – Steam-boat off a Harbour's Mouth* at the Royal Academy, and his new Swiss mountain scene *The Blue Rigi, Sunrise* had been snapped up by Elhanan.

John Ruskin, art critic, artist and social thinker, was also 23 and living next door to Elhanan in Herne Hill. Clarence's uncle Phiz was 27 and had been illustrating Dickens's books for six years. Opera was all the rage; Verdi's *Nabucco*, Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, and Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* all had premières in 1842.

In the natural sciences Charles Darwin had published his monograph on the *Beagle* in 1839, crystallising early stirrings of the idea of evolution by natural selection. These ideas were to have a profound effect on the teachings of the established church and posed intellectual challenges to men like Clarence Bicknell. It is no wonder that, after a formal education and 15 years in the Anglican church, he left Britain, and devoted the rest of his life to botany, archaeology, writing, painting and philanthropy on the Italian Riviera and in the nearby mountains.



J.M.W. Turner *The Blue Rigi, Sunrise*, 1842. Tate.



Clarence Bicknell

William Bicknell = Elizabeth Randell
 1749 - 1825 1756 - 1821

and 7 siblings

Hannah Wootton
 Langton
 1788 - 1815
 1st wife

Mary Jones
 1795 - 1827
 2nd wife

Ethanan Bicknell
 1788 - 1861
 Shipowner

Lucinda Sarah
 Browne
 1801 - 1850
 3rd wife

Ethanan
 Bicknell II
 1813 - 1860
 and 2 siblings
 died young

Mary
 Ann
 Bicknell
 1817 - 1858

Henry
 Sanford
 Bicknell
 1818 - 1880
 = Christine
 Roberts
 1821 - 1872

Herman
 Bicknell
 1830 - 1875

Ada
 Bicknell
 1831 - 1911
 = Edward
 Berry
 1817 - 1875

Algernon
 Sidney
 Bicknell
 1832 - 1911

Margaret Serocold = Edward Ethanan and
 1867 - 1957 Berry 5 siblings
 1 adopted child
 1861 - 1931





and his Close Family

William Leder = Katherine Hunter
Browne 1775-1856
 1771-1855

and 12
siblings

Louisa Holland
 d. 1884
4th wife
No issue

Katherine Ann = Captain Nicholas
Browne 1793-1862
Hablot 1780-c.1830

Hablot Knight
Browne
 1815-1882

"Phiz"

Edgar Percy *Matilda* *Lucinda*
Bicknell Bicknell Bicknell Constance
 1834-1886 1836-1911 1838-1858
No issue *Bicknell*
 1840-1902

Clarence
Bicknell
 1842-1918
No issue

Edgar
Atelstane
Browne
 1842-1917

and 11
siblings

and *Nora* *Matilda* *Linda Mary*
5 siblings *Bicknell* *Bicknell*
 1871-1960 1873-1929
No issue *No issue*

