



Scientific, technological, and civil realizations

Liberty developed in the period known as the “Belle Époque” between 1875 and the outbreak of the First World War. It was the “beautiful era” in which significant socio-economic and artistic-cultural changes took place in a climate of widespread optimism.

A period of relative peace, that allowed the Western world to focus its aims towards the outside, mainly towards Africa, the object of the new colonialism.

Compared to the past, scientific and technological progress accelerated enormously and helped to improve the quality of life. The enhancements made in road and rail systems allowed for faster travel and improved the performance of the existing commercial network. Science, industry, crafts and art met in national, international and universal exhibitions that drew crowds of visitors.

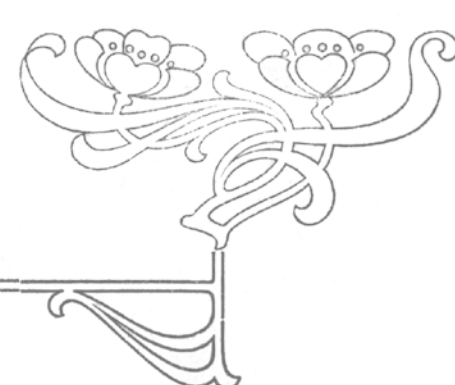
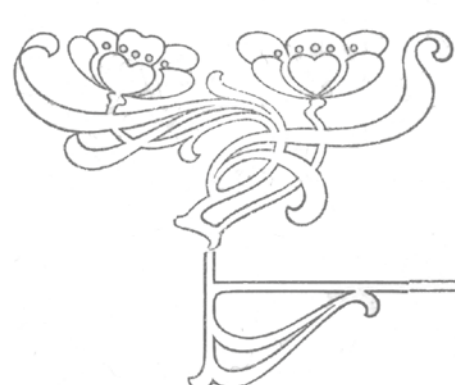
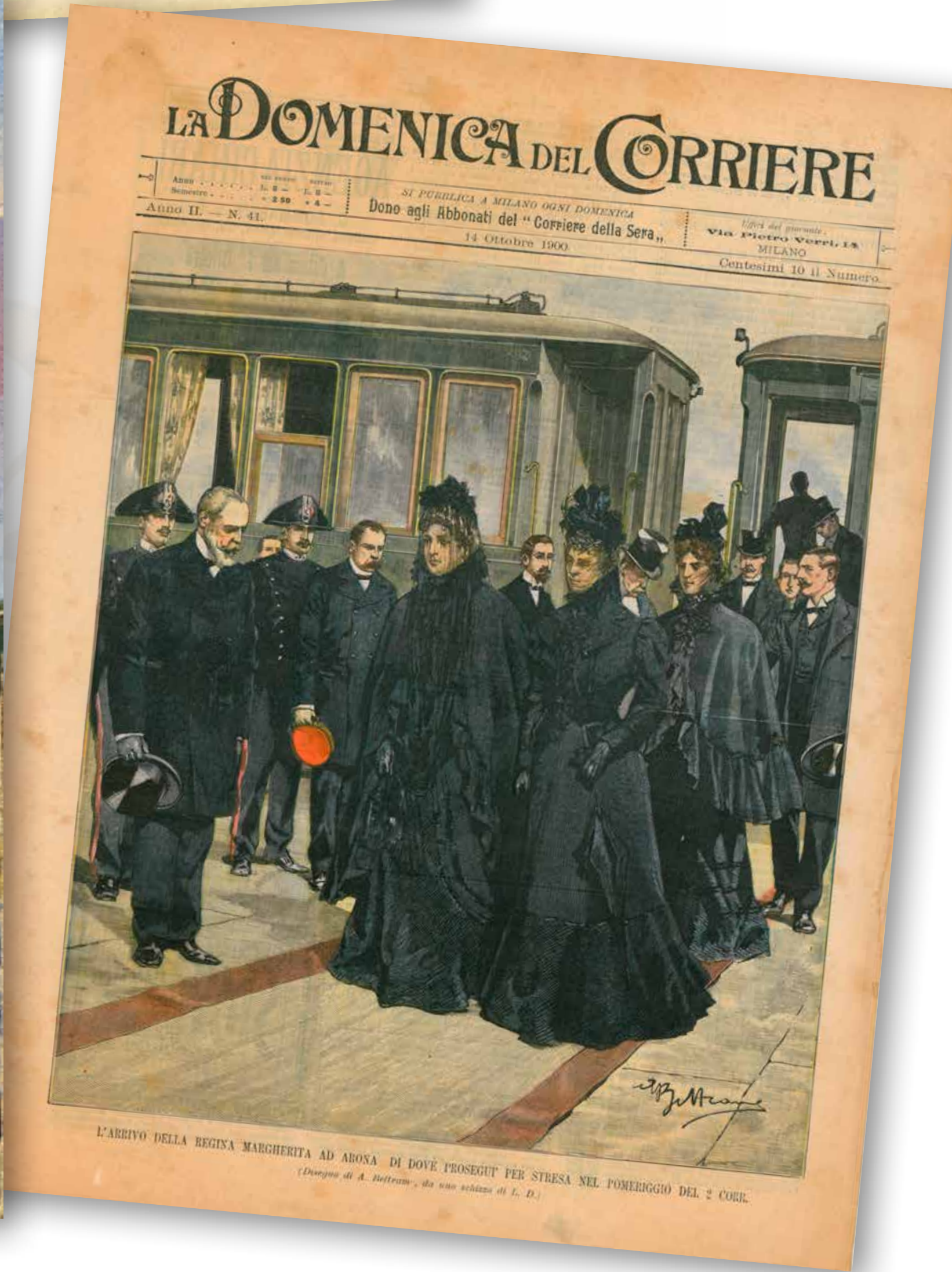
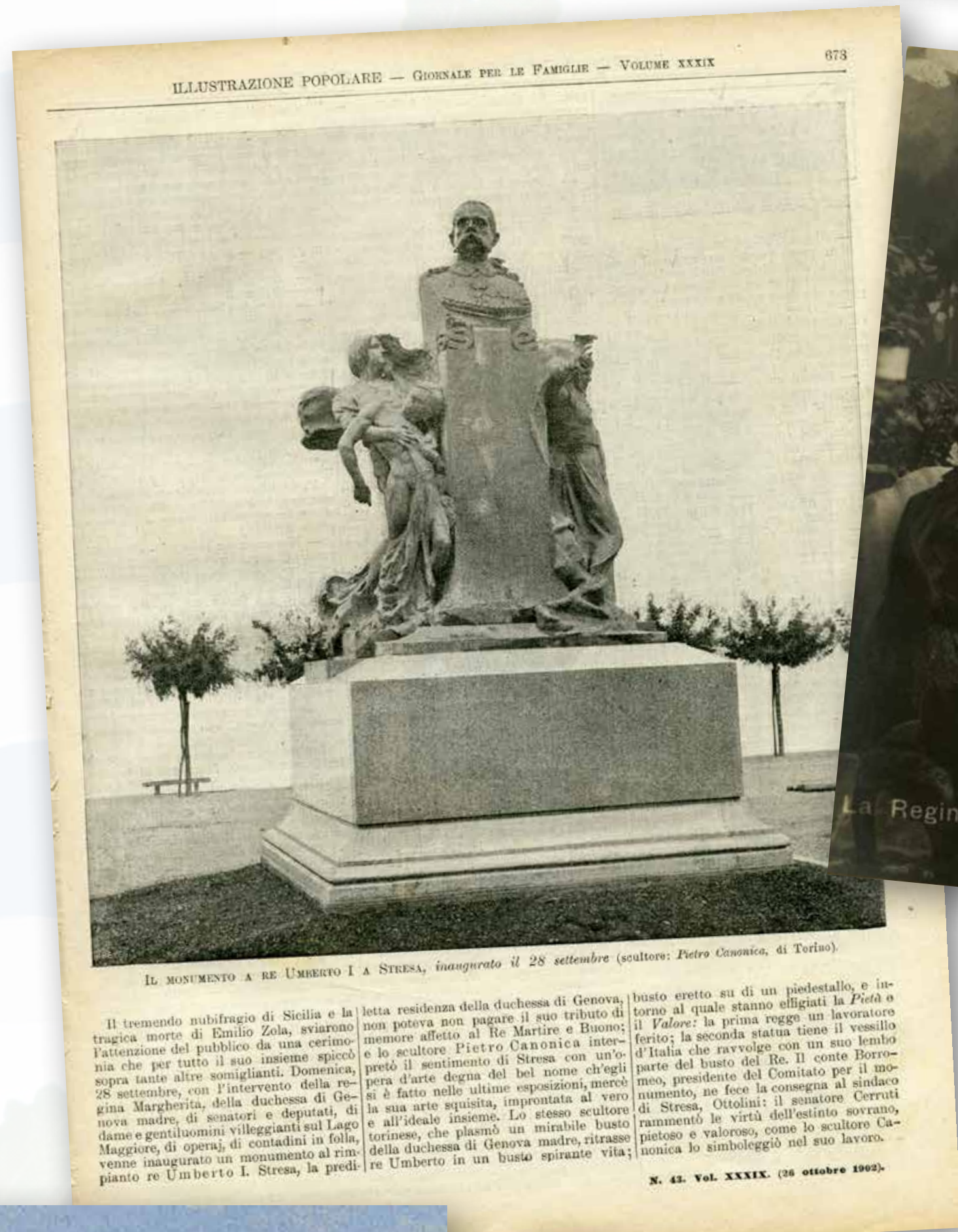
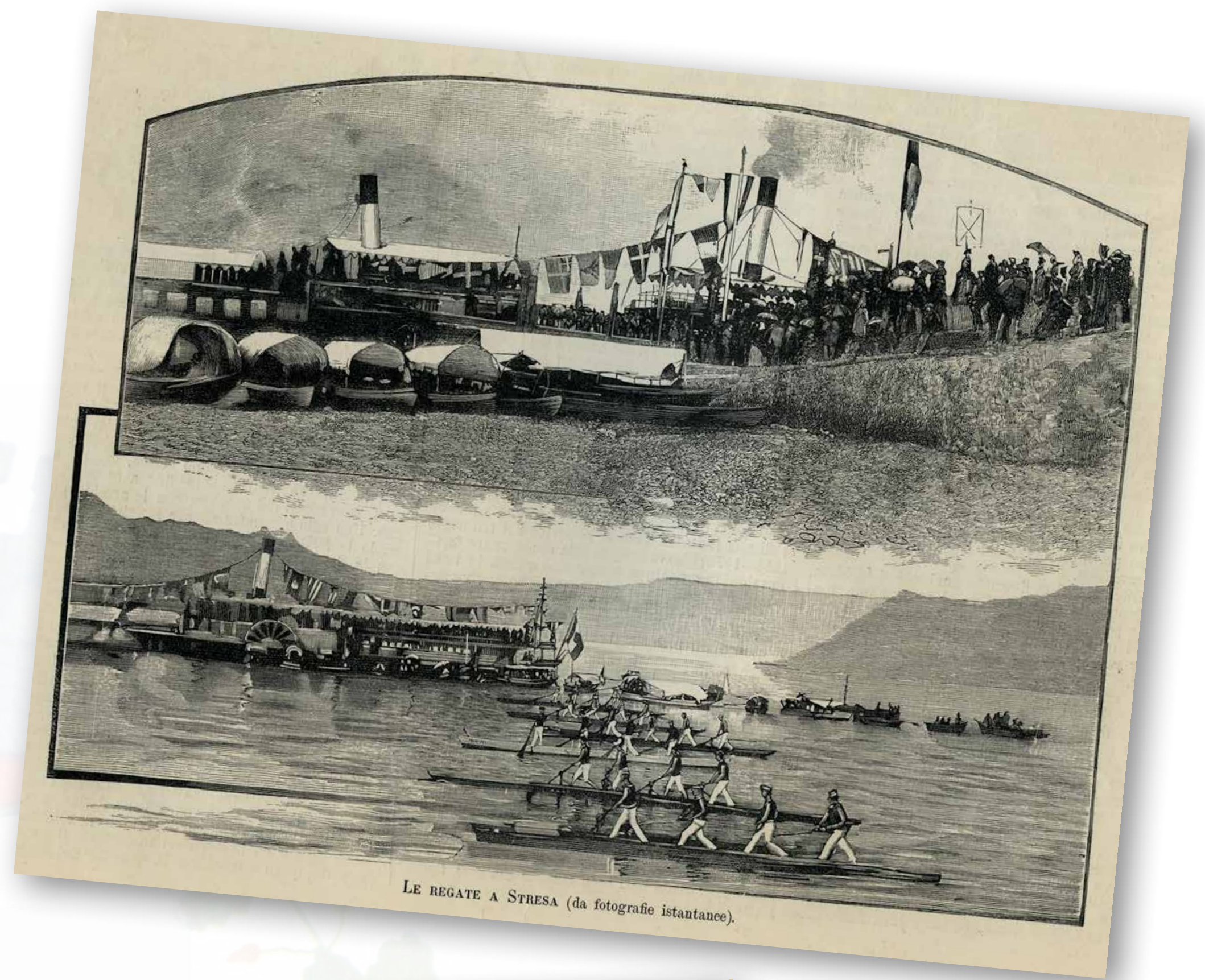
The light bulb, the cinema, the radio, the telephone, the ocean liner, the car and the plane were the big novelties that soon brought about big changes in the world. Sports became important: in 1896 the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens.

The bourgeoisie had its great moment and took advantage of the new opportunities; now more and more people could afford travels, holidays, sports and mundane pastimes. But it was also the time of severe social conflicts and violent political clashes: in 1914, the assassination of the archduke of Austria Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo provoked the outbreak of the First World War. The Belle Epoque was over. Italy had already gone through an equally murderous episode when, in 1900, King Umberto I was assassinated in Monza. The citizens of Stresa had been particularly affected by the King's death. Stresa was loved by the Savoy and the Stresians were fond of the Duchess of Genoa, Queen Margherita's mother, who spent in the little town long periods with her court and her distinguished friends and relatives. Tourism was enhanced by the presence of the Duchess and her entourage.

As the town lifestyle went through changes, new associations and clubs were set up, each having different purposes such as social, touristic, cultural and sporting ones: the Pro Stresa, the Corale, the Band, the “Regio Verbano Yacht Club” and the “La Stresa Sportiva”.

In 1896, public lighting was inaugurated and the streets were lit up.

“The town of Stresa is electrically lit.” Thus wrote the historian Francesco Roi in his nineteenth-century guide to Lake Maggiore and continued: *“Nothing more wonderful and fantastic, in the evening, than the façades of sumptuous hotels lit by hundreds of incandescent bulbs, while numerous arc lamps project their bright rays on terraces and gardens, where the elegant crowd strolls”.*



English

