



Competitions, mundanity and sportsmanship

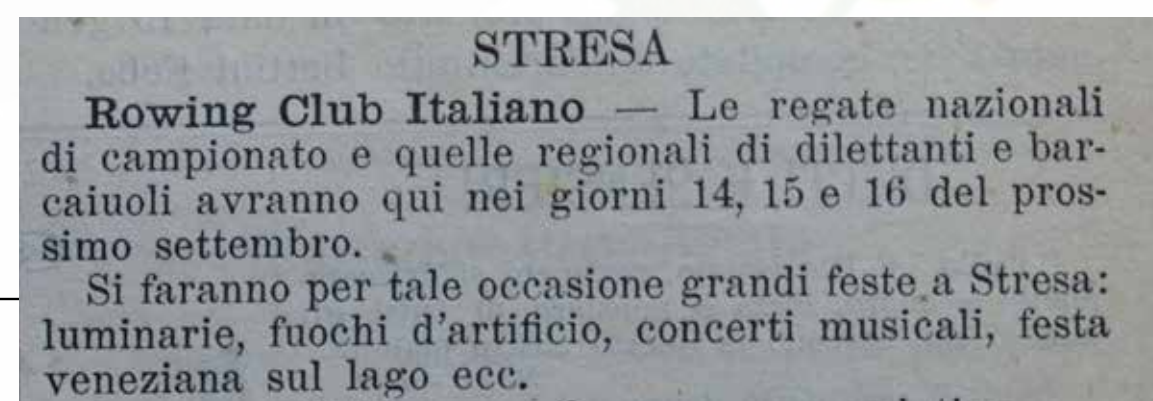
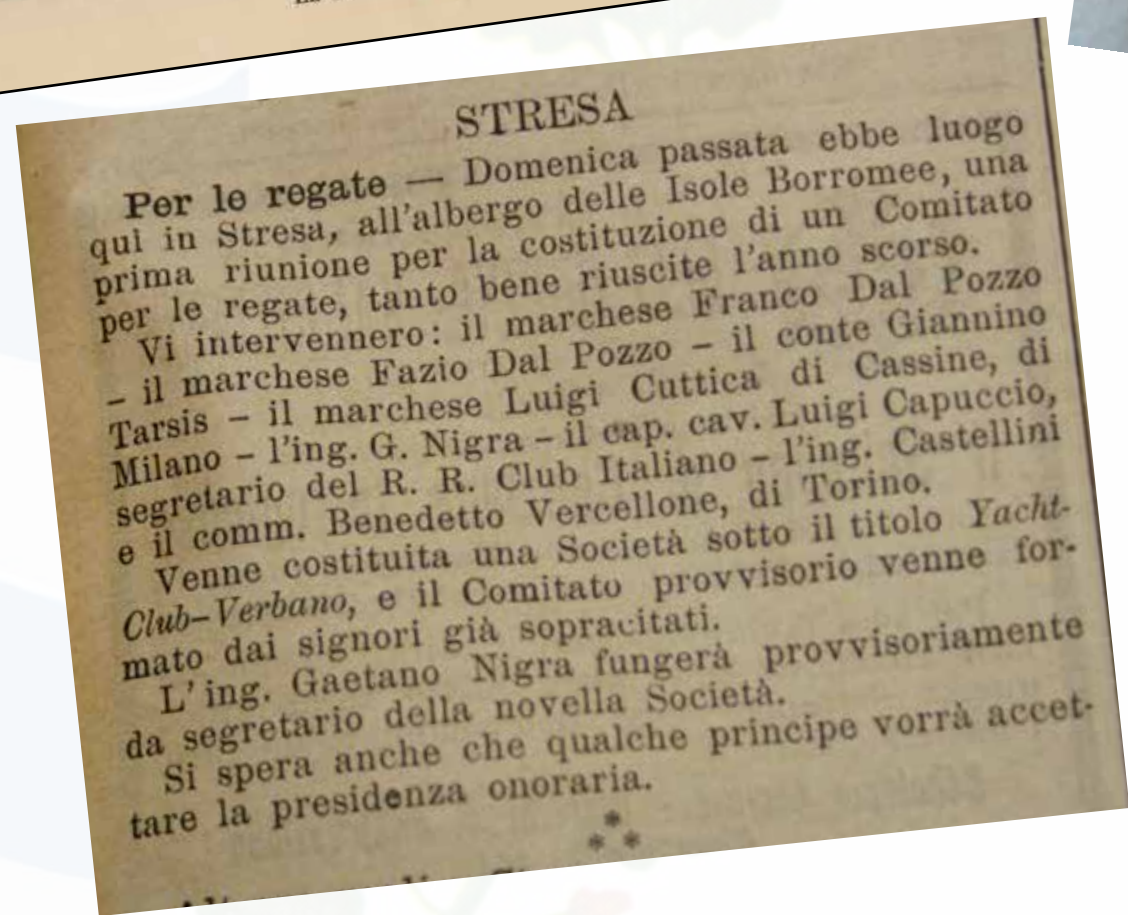
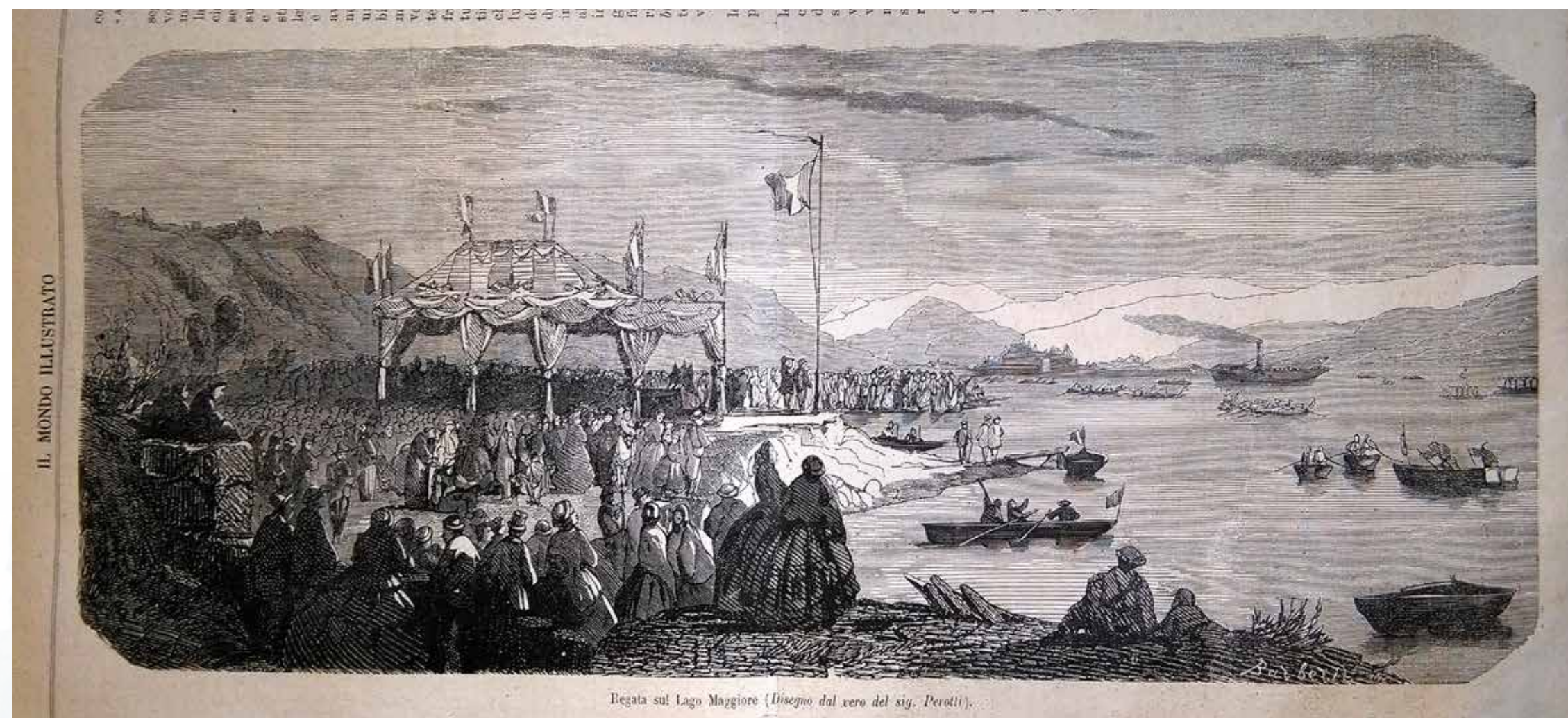
In 1858, one of Italy's first rowing societies (Società delle Regate sul Lago Maggiore) was founded in Belgirate, on the Piedmontese shores of Lake Maggiore, amid confidence in the economic and tourist development of the lake lands. The list of members includes many personalities - including foreigners - of the beautiful world and aristocracy, such as the Counts Borromeo and the Duchess of Genoa, a noblewoman of the House of Savoy since 1857 who owned "Villa Ducale" in Stresa.

The conception and promotion is due to the Neapolitan Ruggero Bonghi (1826-1895), a man of letters, patriot, academic and politician, builder in those years of villas in Stresa and Belgirate.

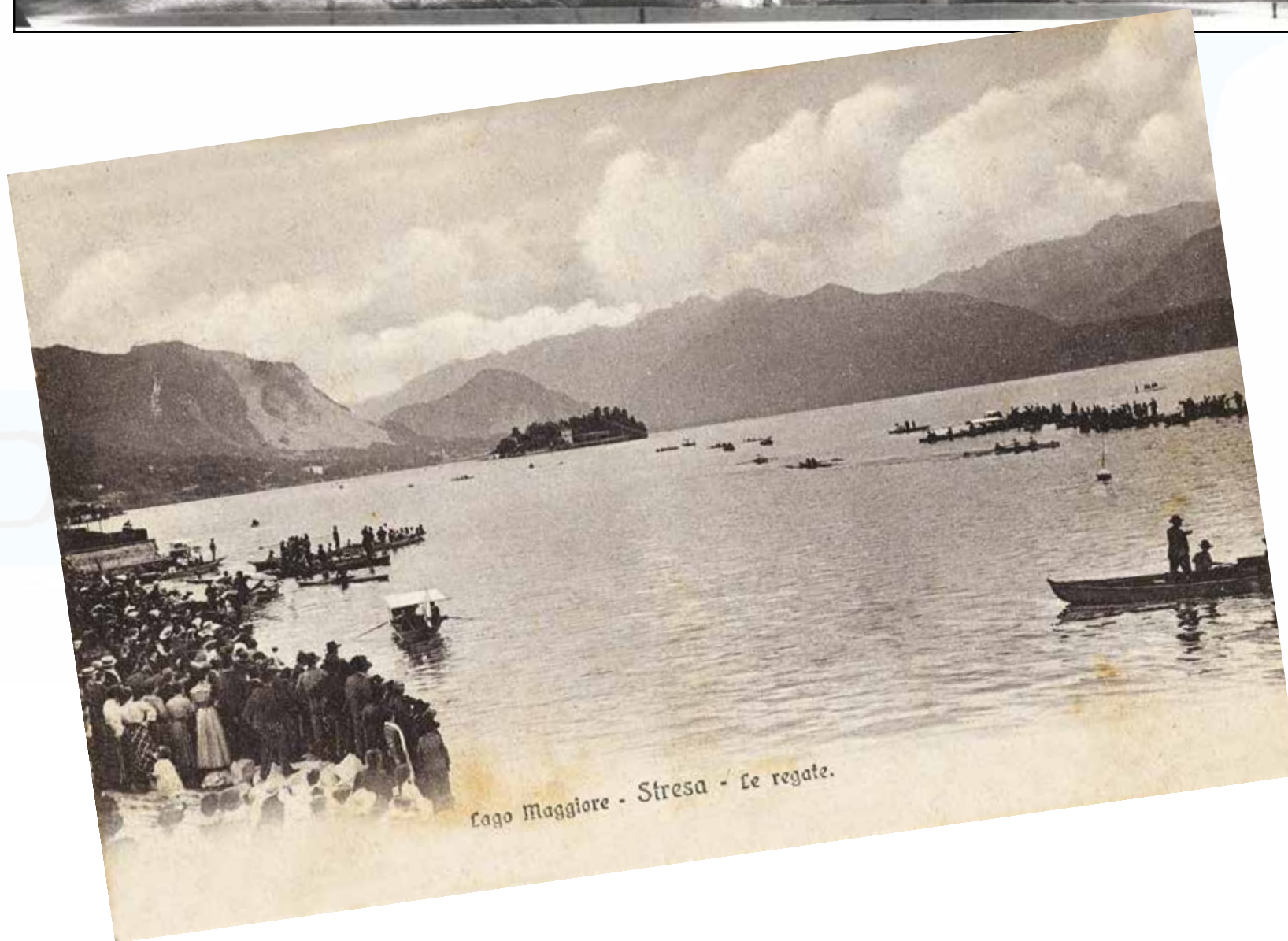
The purpose of the initiative, as historian Vincenzo De Vit (1811-1892) writes, "was not only entertainment, however, but also to foster the art of boat making, to improve navigation on the lake and to train skilled and experienced rowers". It turns out, in fact, that as many as two boatyards (Fantoni, Taroni) had started their activities in Stresa at that time.

We learn from the Society's rules that the races were open to its members, Verbano residents and outsiders. "The first regatta, which was given on the waters of our Lake was in August 1858 and was crowned with happy success". That date marked the beginning of a long tradition that would see many towns host and organize, in front of an ever-growing public, local, national and even European-scale competitions (Pallanza, 1897 and 1906).

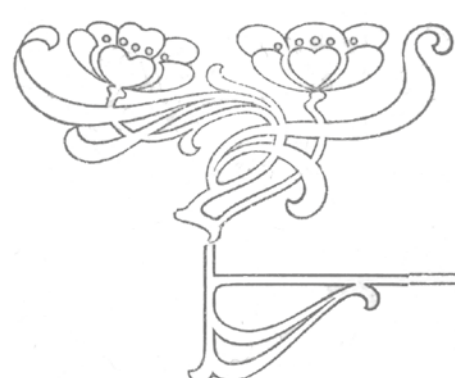
Stresa from September 14 to 16, 1889 is the scene of the first Italian rowing championship, which the "Gazzetta Piemontese" describes in detail. In fact, the various types of boats competing (e.g., canoes, sandolines, lances), the distances to be covered (from 1250 to 3500 meters), the categories of participants (rowers from sports clubs, boatmen, amateurs), the names of the competitions, and the prizes up for grabs are all indicated. These include the cup donated by Queen Margaret, which arrives in Stresa on September 16. These are festive days: during the day the lake is a bustle of boats and boats, and the shores are packed with crowds and guests; at night it is enlivened by parties, music, dancing, and sparkling under fireworks and the lights of the specially lit gulf villas.



Gare Sociali di Luglio - In alto: l'equipaggio vittorioso a Ville d'Este fot. Ceretti



Lago Maggiore - Stresa - Le regate.



English

