



A Queen, a Style, a Flower

Margherita di Savoia (Turin, 1851 - Bordighera, 1926), wife of Umberto I, King of Italy from 1878 to 1900, was not just the first queen of Italy for the residents of Stresa but also a near “family” figure. They had seen her since she was a child, vacationing with her brother Tommaso in the large palace by the lake, which had been owned by their mother, the Duchess of Genoa, since 1857. Later, during her marriage (1868-1900) and widowhood, she continued to stay in Stresa.

Devoted to the Savoy cause and conservative in politics, Margherita is remembered as a woman of charm and regal grace, educated, cultured, and brilliant in society, with political intuition and generosity towards her subjects. She was admired everywhere, capable of winning the hearts of Italians, and became a style icon.

Photographs and portraits, especially from the “Umbertine era,” show that Margherita interpreted the fashion of her time with a somewhat flamboyant taste: she favored sumptuous dresses adorned with lace and rich in embroidered and applied flowers, and she wore numerous strands of pearls and variously shaped jewelry, including those in the form of daisies. She also used flowers to adorn her hair.

Among the tributes paid to the queen is the magazine “Margherita. Giornale delle Signore Italiane” (“Margherita. Journal of Italian Ladies”), aimed at an upper-middle-class audience, published in Milan from 1878 to 1921. In line with this “Margherita cult” is a poetic story, “La Margherita,” published in honor of the Queen Mother in 1910 in the magazine “Verbania.” The story tells of the growth of the “gentle” flower from the earth where a drop had fallen, born from the union of a shepherd boy’s tears over his beloved’s death and the spirit of the girl descending among mortals in the form of a snowflake.

Stresa has dedicated its typical biscuits, the “Margheritine,” to her. These biscuits, made with hard-boiled egg yolk, butter, and flour, were created by Pietro Antonio Bolongaro. According to tradition, he either sent them to the Royal Family vacationing at Villa Ducale in 1857 or offered them to Margherita for her First Communion. They were greatly appreciated by the House of Savoy.

