

Locarno contains about 1500 inhabitants. Part of the town is built on a promontory in form of a crescent with two wings; in front is a row of trees, and the public walk. The old part of the town is dirty, and the streets narrow. It contains three convents, and a small Franciscan monastery, perched on a rock overhanging the valley, and commanding a superb view of the lake and its magnificent boundaries. The canopy, in the church of the Capuchins, deserves to be mentioned for its beautiful execution; it is of straw work, and almost rivals velvet and gold fringe.

Of the four transalpine bailliages which belong to the twelve cantons, Lugano holds the principal rank, Locarno* the second. The governor, or commissary as he is called, is sent in succession by all the cantons except Appenzel; he remains in office two years, in criminal affairs his decision is absolute; in civil, an appeal lies to the annual syndicate from the regent cantons, and from thence to the Helvetic body assembled at the diet. The emoluments of this post are not great; but the profits unfortunately depend too much on the virtue of the man, as they arise principally from fines exacted for criminal offences. The people enjoy some privileges, and hold an annual assembly in the month of January, in which they elect twenty counsellors; twelve out of the town, three from Ascona, the remainder from the country at large. These counsellors have the charge of watching over the interests of the republic, as far as does not interfere with the superior powers, of settling the public expences, and of raising the supplies paid to the governor. These bailliages do not produce corn sufficient for their domestic consumption; that grain is furnished by treaty from the duchy of Milan, and is weekly imported from Livino, a village on the opposite shore. The chief food of the peasants is a cake made with maize and millet; the inhabitants on the banks of the lake are well supplied with fish.

The fisheries give employment to a great number of hands, although they are in some degree subject to monopolies. In the months of May and June, from 200 to 250 lb. weight are taken in a day: trout of 40 lb. and perch of 9 lb. are found in the lake.

In 1555, the doctrines of the reformation had made considerable progress in these parts: but the Catholic cantons, at the general diet, obtained an edict, that those who refused to return to the ancient faith should quit the town and province. Numbers, thus driven from their native country, were received with open arms by the canton of Zurich, which was benefited by their industry, and owes to them the introduction of the silk manufactures.

Locarno was once situated on the lake, and had a port capable of receiving large barks: at present it stands at the distance of a quarter of a mile; a circumstance owing to the accumulation of sand brought down by the torrent Maggia.

The little voyage from hence to Magadino is delightful: we crossed the upper part of the lake in an hour; the banks of this noble piece of water rise boldly, and are well wooded: Locarno forms a fine object, to the south is the opening into the Val Maggia, terminated by mountains covered with eternal snow. The spot where we landed consists only of a few scattered houses, for the purpose of receiving the merchandise, which is put on shore and sent on horses to Bellinzona. Old Magadino is more inland, and owed its origin to the vicinity of the lake, the retreating of which has caused its ruin. From thence the road winds up the steep sides of the mountain Cenero, through woods of walnut and chestnut trees, interspersed with oak and holly; on the summit of the passage is a small oval plain, the boundary of the bailliages of Locarno and Lugano. On

* These two bailliages of Lugano and Locarno, together with those of Val Maggia, Mend. Cenero, and Balerna, are formed into the canton or department of Lugano.