

A charming sail on Lake Maggiore, with magnificent views of the distant snow-clad Alps, brought us in the evening to Isola Bella—"the beautiful island." In the seventeenth century, a famous Count Borromeo converted this barren crag into a garden of delight. It rises in ten terraces a hundred feet above the lake; and is stocked with luxuriant orange and lemon trees, cypresses, laurels, magnolias, magnificent oleanders, and fragrant camphor trees. Fountains, grottoes, and statuary adorn this lovely spot. We found the château and gardens closed; but by dint of perseverance we effected an entrance, and, by a judicious fee, obtained permission to explore the beauties of the scene. Near by is the many-turreted château of Baveno, where Queen Victoria was an honoured guest during her visit to Italy.

In the after-glow of a golden sunset, we were rowed by a pirate-looking boatman to Stresa, where I parted with my companion in travel, he crossing the Alps by the Simplon route, and I by the St. Gotthard Pass.

On a lofty hill near the lake, overlooking the country which he loved so well, is a colossal statue of St. Charles Borromeo, one hundred and twelve feet high, his hand stretched out in perpetual benediction upon its hamlets and villages.

Traversing the entire length of Lake Maggiore, between towering mountains on either side, I took the train for Biasca, the present terminus of the railway. The road follows the winding valley of the Ticino. The scenery is a blending of Alpine grandeur with soft Italian beauty. Villas, churches, and ancient castles crown the neighbouring heights. Snowy cascades gleam through the dense foliage and leap headlong from the cliffs. Huge fallen rocks bestrew the valley, as though the Titans had here piled Pelion on Ossa, striving to storm the skies.

From the dining-table of the hotel at Biasca, I looked up and up to a cliff towering hundreds of feet above my head, making at night a deeper blackness in the air, from which leaped with a single bound a snowy waterfall. Before sunset I set out for my first Alpine climb. A steep winding path ascended the hill to a pilgrimage chapel. Along the wayside were a number of shrines adorned with glaring frescoes and rudely carved, pathetic dead Christs, with an offering of withered flowers before them. I gathered some lovely anemones, which flung their censers in the mountain air, and drank deep delight from the sublimity of the prospect. Coming down, I lost the path, when a peasant woman, mowing in the fields, kindly dropped her scythe and tripped