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R O S I N A.

Sargent's
SARGENT'S FAMOUS ANACAPRI *model*
MODEL.

THE TYPE THAT FASCINATED HIM

ANACAPRI

1535—1935

The Honourable Evan Charteris K.C. in his "Life of John Sargent R.A." mentions amongst other things my introducing Rosina to Sargent. Rosina was the daughter of an Anacapri woman a descendant of that blood-thirsty pirate Barbarossa.

It was the artist seeking new types and views to paint, who first discovered Anacapri. The Anacapriotes were almost isolated from the rest of the island on account of the dangerous approach to their village, for a slip off the roughly hewn steps meant being hurled 1,000 feet to the rocks below. So small a colony were they that they were all related one to the other; you could see at a glance they were a distinct type for the strain of the Arab was very marked in them.

Rosina, the model, discovered by a French painter named Chatran, was about fourteen; she soon became a great favourite with all the artists; very quick to understand the pose required of her, and able to speak French fluently. There were only three resident English painters on the Island, but many noted French artists.

Sargent, who had just arrived in Capri, chatting one day in my studio, asked me if I could find him a model of a particular type; he explained what he wanted. I at once thought of 'Rosina'; when he saw her he was so fascinated with her that he made three studies in profile of her, all of which he painted in my studio; one he signed and gave to me, one his sister possessed and was in the exhibition of his work in Burlington House, but what became of the other I didn't know. I tried my hardest to trace it, for I felt sure it was still to be discovered in Capri. To show how casual Sargent was about his work, I saw in his little bedroom at the Grandia Marina stacks of these studies on the floor, and even on his bed. Here is an instance.

I remember he and I were one day in the local, carpenter's shop, and to more fully explain what he wanted, took from a sheaf of poached boards he had under his arm one, but having no paper he drew on it a design of the alteration he wanted made to his studio window and left it with Arcangelo the carpenter. Many months afterwards I saw on the

Floor in this same shop amidst a mass of shavings and dirty rubbish the board Sargent had used; picking it up and removing the dirt I discovered a most delightful sketch of an Olive orchard; Archangelo said he had no further use for it, and gave it to me.

Barbarossa, the pirate, so history tells us, was the commander of Soulman The Magnificent Forces in Turkey; he was continually making raids on Anacapri carrying off the women, who were noted then, as they are now, for their beauty, eventually selling them to the Moors as slaves, never again to see their beautiful Island.

Travellers rarely came to inspect ruins of Barbarossa's Castle or to see the cluster of Arab houses nestling under the walls of the Castle. These unfortunate Capriotes to save themselves from the clutches of this brute posted sentinels on the summit of Monte Solaro to warn them of his approach. One of these Towers (La Guardia) from which watch was kept for the Pirates, still exists on the estate of the Author of "San Michele" (Dr. Axel Munthe). The moment they were sighted they fled to their refuge, a cave high up on the mountain, the climb to which was extremely dangerous. They argued that the more dangerous it was for the pirates, the safer it was

for themselves. The Capriotes were expert climbers, and always climbed the rocks in their bare feet; but in spite of the care they took, a tragedy would sometimes happen; as to the pirates they seldom dared follow.

I remember, in my time, a young fellow ventured the climb against all advice; a strong Tramontana ^{was} blowing; he was carrying on his head a spazzoni (a large flat basket) containing some ready-cooked Quail for the parish priest's breakfast; a gust of wind came, and in trying to save his precious burden, lost his balance, and was swept off and dashed 1,000 feet to the rocks below. In the event of the women being hard-pressed they could hold this almost vertical path against any odds by hurling rocks on the heads of their enemies.

Though known as Barbarossa's Castle, this red-bearded rascal did not build it, it was built by the Carthusian monks as a refuge against the pirates who infested these seas. They were many times raided but always unsuccessfully, until one day came the great Corsair, Barbarossa, tempted no doubt by the treasure said to be hidden within its walls; in 1535 he took it by storm carrying off the principal inhabitants as hostages, selecting the most beautiful girls for his harem. The others he presented to his master Solumin The Magnificent. To Barbarossa's cunning and daring Solumin owed many of his great sea victories.

Having captured this monastic fort he decided to build two towers to strengthen the walls, but during the building many of his best men deserted him, and having married Anacapri girls, settled in the most inaccessible parts of the island and defied him.

One glorious morning in November 1868 I lay in my deck-chair on the loggia filling my lungs with the sweet scent of Tangerine-blossom. The sun was shining through the vine-leaves overhead, throwing discs of golden light on the white napery of the table: in the mellow shade were two china bowls always kept well filled with fruit: one had bunches of Muscat-grapes in it, the other peaches and a large melon.

At that moment my Capri maid entered and handed me my budget of papers, and my letters, glancing at one of the papers I gave an involuntary shudder as I read in large type — London enveloped in piercing cold fog—many road casualties—14 killed.

Having mapped out my day, which proved a very exciting one (it was the 'Feast-day' of the Patron Saint of the Island) I heard there had been a delay in the procession starting, just imagine the excitement, for all sorts of rumours got about; one was that the Saint had to be fetched from a Bank

in Naples, and by a specially guarded boat. If the truth must be told the 'Saint' had been in pawn, he had been found very useful several times during the financial straits of the town but this time he was to be—~~free~~! gloriously free— (until his next retirement.)

Years after Barbarossa's death, and his murderous crew had been wiped out, the peasants cut another very risky but picturesque path in the rocks to Anacapri. This tempted many famous artists to paint them, they ^{Steps} are now seldom used as there is a good carriage road to Anacapri but in my time there were no roads, donkeys were used to carry visitors ^{Part of the way} up to Anacapri.

The blazing heat of a midday sun with not a speck of green shade to be seen, didn't help to make my climb to ~~Monte Solara any easier.~~

~~The view looking down over the town from this giddy~~ height was magnificent. Bathed in the glowing heat of a midday sun were the romantic islands of the 'Sirens' mentioned in the 'Odyssey' in that great epic poem written by Homer.

On the mainland, a little way up the mountain to the left, were the gleaming white walls of Amalfi, and in the distance the snow-capped Appenines, a glorious sight! In the valley, clouds of sweet-smelling incense arose as the procession wound its way through the vineyards, the sun shining on the glittering gold-embroidered priests vestments, and the wonderful silver image of their saint, ^{allage} ~~alike~~ with precious stones, and carried shoulder-high beneath its crimson silk canopy; the thunder of the bombe echoing from valley to valley, the chanting voices of the choir, the subdued notes of the old Anacapri organ, formed one glorious harmony never to be forgotten.

After inspecting the ruins of Barborossa's Castle, I arrived at the little straggling "Oasis" of Arab dwellings nestling under the Castle walls; but not a soul could I see, it was then that I remembered it was the "Siesta", that religiously kept hour of the day when everybody, (not in the "Procession") would be asleep. In a few minutes the "Siesta" would be over, crowds of little brown urchins and pretty girls with their young men would be hurrying off to the hills, to gather in their harvest of grain to be winnowed by the mountain breeze.

Handsome girls would be carrying on their heads large glass Piretti of red Capri wine, to be drunk that evening at the "Tarantellas" given on the thrashing-floors, and roofs of the Artists' studios; the most delighted of the spectators being Sargent.

Heading this Article is a most delightful portrait of "Rosina", painted from life; you have only to glance at the one reproduced in the Hon. Evan Charteris K.C. "Life of John Sargent R.A." to see how true to type it is - looking at it I could well understand the fascination it had for Sargent.

Take for instance that firm but rather cruel mouth, not only did it show the Will but the Courage to face a danger, if needs be, to seek revenge for a wrong done. Again look at that small but powerful jaw, that drooping eye of the Orient, the beautifully rounded neck, and lissom young figure, none but a "Master" could express all these subtle points so accurately and above all so rapidly as "Sargent" the greatest painter of our time.