

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin
Mortimer Standing

Series II: Literary Productions, ca. 1919-1979;
n.d.

July 2022

Box 09, Folder 41 - "Rolf-The Faithful Messenger" (includes photographs)(E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/standing-manuscripts>

Recommended Citation

Standing, Edwin Mortimer, "Box 09, Folder 41 - "Rolf-The Faithful Messenger" (includes photographs)(E.M.S.)" (2022). *Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing*. 92. <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/standing-manuscripts/92>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Series II: Literary Productions, ca. 1919-1979; n.d. at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.

ROLF - THE FAITHFUL MESSENGER.

by

MORTIMER STANDING.

E. Mortimer Standing
4831 - 35th Ave. S. W.
Seattle, Wash. 98126

ROLF - THE FAITHFUL MESSENGER

The manner in which I came to make the acquaintance of Rolf, the famous Alsatian, makes rather a curious story in itself. It happened like this. I was staying at Cortina d'Ampezzo the well-known skiing and health resort in the Italian Alps. One day I was having a drink with some friends at a hotel, when a lady who was present remarked that she had had rather a strange experience the day before. "I was spending the night," she said, "at a little hotel up in the mountains above Cortina. At breakfast the next morning I asked for another roll." "I am sorry, madam," apologised the waitress: "we have run out of them for the moment. But you will not have to wait long; we have sent Rolf down to the bakers in Cortina; he ought to be back any minute now". Considering that Cortina was a good 2000 feet down the mountain and more than a mile distant I could not help thinking that Rolf must be a stout-hearted hotel boy to do such a trip before breakfast. Further conversation, however revealed the fact that Rolf was an Alsatian dog. And sure enough, in a few minutes Rolf arrived - and the rolls."

This seemed to me a sufficiently remarkable story to make me want to see this wonder dog for myself. Accordingly a few days after this I found myself making my way through the

majestic pine woods to the little plateau on which the village ~~is situated~~ is situated. I soon saw the Villa Argentina (where the lady had stayed) and walked towards it. ^{Fig I} On getting near to it I heard a low and rather ominous growl. It came from a large, handsome and rather formidable looking Alsatian dog which was squatting in the long grass not far from the hotel door. I went onwards and knocked at the door and the rumblings ceased. A charming young lady, in Tyroleon costume, made her appearance. I explained to her my mission; and, far from being annoyed at my intrusion, she was most friendly. "Come," she said with a smile, "I will introduce you to Rolf; he is just outside. He's not particularly affable with strangers now - he's getting old you know, he's nearly 10 years old. But he will be all right when he sees you with me". As soon as I had been, as it were, formally introduced to him by his mistress Rolf's whole demeanour changed. He became quite friendly, allowed himself to be patted and wagged his tail.

I mentioned to the Signorina the story I had heard about the rolls and she said: "Yes it is quite true. Rolf does quite a lot of our shopping, and is particularly helpful in an emergency, as on that particular day."

"How do you set about it?" I asked.

"It is quite simple. We just call him and fix his bag on him, and enclose a note to the butcher or baker whichever it happens to be. And off he goes trotting steady down the read to Cortina.

"But how does he know whether to go to the butchers or to the bakers"?

"We just tell him - and somehow or other he seems to understand".

"I'd love to see him go on a message" I remarked.

"As a matter of fact," said the Signorina" you have come at a fortunate moment. I have just prepared some sandwiches and coffee for the others who are working up in the hayfield about half a mile away. I cannot take it myself as I am alone on duty in the hotel so I am going to send Rolf instead. Excuse me just a moment....." Whereupon she went back into the hotel and emerged a moment later carrying a sort of brightly coloured bag made out of a large coloured handkerchief.

From the door of the hall, where we were standing, she called to Rolf, who by this time had settled down comfortably in his niche in the grass in front of the house. He heard the summons and pricked up his ears; but it was as plain as a pike-staff, from his expression, that he was not a bit pleased at the summons and would much prefer to go on reclining at his ease in the sun. It was obvious, too, that he had recognised

the bag and was well aware what it meant. After all he was an old dog - as dogs go - and he looked as if he "felt that ~~the~~ deserved a place in the retired list.

However he was well trained and loyal; and at the second call he pulled himself together, got on to his feet like an old soldier - and trotted briskly - if rather stiffly - up to his mistress.

Patiently he stood waiting whilst she fastened the bag with the "elevenses" in it round his neck. ^{Fig 5} "Now off you go my dear", she said cheerfully, giving him an affectionate pat "off you go - up to the hay field". Here she pointed up the hill. With a farewell wag of his tail Rolf turned round and set off at a steady trot up the lane leading up the mountain.

It was a hot ~~day~~ ^{day}, but I was determined not to miss any of the show if I could help it. Rolf's progress was direct and single minded. He would not let himself be tempted from the path of duty by any smells, however alluring, that must have assailed his delicate nostrils from the lane or the hedges. He simply went straight on turning neither to the right or the left. I puffed on up the hill after him getting gradually further and further behind. It was a relief when after about ten minutes Rolf turned to the right and entered a level hayfield.

I followed up as quickly as I could and got there just in time to see Rolf go straight up to an elderly peasant

woman in a picturesque costume who was holding a rake with a long handle. As soon as Rolf reached her he stood with the same quiet passivity - waiting for his mission to be fulfilled by the removal of his bag. ^{Fig 6} This done he seemed suddenly a changed dog. He wagged his tail, gave a short bark, and turned round and galloped off - gamballed off one might almost say - to join his master who was working with two other men at the other end of the field. His master seemed almost as pleased to see Rolf as he was to greet his master.

A short picnic followed in which Rolf joined in as one of the family. He seemed now in a really festive mood and performed various antics which included begging for a piece of the food he himself had brought. (Fig. 7). The time of refreshment over Rolf and his master had a sort of rough and tumble game together (Fig. 8), until the voice of duty called again, and rakes and hayforks were picked up once more.

To Rolf, too, came the call of duty again. This time it was his master who fastened on his bag (Fig. 9), and gave his *sailing* orders to return home. With a last lick of his master's hand and a wag of his tail, Rolf turned his back on his friends and set off down the hill with the same steady determination. (Fig. 10).

Arrived at the hotel he stood at attention to be relieved of his bag by his mistress, who, ^{after} ~~although~~ giving him a caress and a few tit-bits, allowed ^{return to} him to his own devices. His job of work thus completed he ^{made for} ~~returned to~~ his resting place in front of the hotel where I had first seen him, and sat down with a thank-goodness-that's-over look on his noble features. Yet at the same I thought also I detected an expression of satisfaction at having performed his duty. (Fig.)

I mentioned this to his mistress half thinking she would make fun of me for imagining such ideas to exist in a dog's head. But on the contrary she took my remark quite seriously, and said, "As a matter of fact Rolf has a tremendous sense of duty; and ^{one} ~~one~~ he has been put on a job nothing will deflect him from it. If anyone - man or dog - tries to stop him, or speaks to him, he bristles up and growls angrily, keeping rigidly to his path of duty ^{ever} ~~wherein~~ it leads.

Last year when the cows were up in the high meadow, he used to be sent down regularly by the men who were milking the cows with a couple of bottles of advanced milk to the hotel. One day on his way down Rolf had an accident, and the bottles of milk were broken against a stone and all the milk was spilt. Rolf, as usual, was doing this away ^{all} by himself, and when this mishap occurred he was so ashamed that he wouldn't come home. It was only hours afterwards

when he still had not put in an appearance that we began to get really anxious - for we knew that Rolf knows every inch of the country. So in the end we went off in a search party. We found him eventually skulking behind a bush, and all that time the sense of shame was still consuming his honest doggy soul. It took us quite a while to convince him that everything was all right; but in the end his 'guilt complex' was lifted, like a weight off his heart, and he became his own self again. His relief was so great that he danced round us barking with joy as we set off down the hill".

Once Rolf acted a part in a film, and did it so well that the Director of the film company wanted to buy him. "He offered us a very good price for him; but of course we did not consider parting with him for a moment. How could we? - he is one of the family?"

The evening's shadows lengthened, and an almost unearthly light shone on the Alpine summits as I set off to walk down the beautiful path through the wood to Cortina. As I went I could not help brooding over the mystery of the animal world - so like us in many ways and yet so different, so near and yet so far, so utterly beyond our ken. On the way I met a farmer returning from his work and we got talking

together. He, of course, had heard of Rolf, as everyone else who lived in the district. "Wonderful dog, that there Rolf", he remarked, "he can do almost everything but speak !"

And I was inclined to agree with him.

E. Martimer Standing

E. Mortimer Standing
4831-35th Ave. S.W.
Seattle, Wash. 98126



Age , dignity and character are plainly written on the old Alsatian's face . Since these pictures were taken Rolf , the Faithful Messneger , has passed on to whatever part of the Universe good dogs go to when their loyal service is ended .



Villa Argentina , the hotel where Rolf lived ,
near Cortina d' Ampezzo , in the Italian Alps .

2



Rolf , taking a rest near his home .



"Who's coming here , a friend or foe ?"



Rolf and his mistress in the flower-studded meadow
of an Alpine Spring day .



The Signorina fastens the bag , containing sandwiches
and coffee for the hay-makers , round the faithful
messenger's neck .

6



Up in the hay-field the hay-maker , in peasant costume rests her rake on her shoulders whilst she lifts the welcome burden from Rolf's neck .

7



Rolf joins in the picnic for which he himself
has brought the victuals .

B



After the meal Rolf and his master have a game together .

89



"Time for work again now old fellow - for both of us ."

10



Rolf sets off down the hill on the return journey to the hotel .