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Phantastes Chapter 4: Ballad of Sir Aldingar

James Kinsley

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Sir Aldingar

By James Kinsley

Our king he kept a false steward
Men called him Sir Aldingar.
He wolde haue layen by our comely queene,
Her deere worshipp to haue betraide;
Our queene shee was a good woman
And euer more said him nay.

Aldingar was offended in his mind,
With her hee was neuer content,
But he sought what meanes he cold find out.
In a fyer to haue her brent.

There came a lame later to the Kings gates,
A lazar was [b]lind and lame
He tooke the lazar vpon his backe
Vpon the queenes bed he did him lay;

He said, Lye still, lazar, wheras thou lyst,
Looke thou goe not away,
Ile make thee a whole man and a sound
In two howres of a day.

And then went forth Sir Aldingar
Our Queene for to betray,
And then he mett with our comlye King,
Saies, God you saue and see!

If I had space as I haue grace,
A message I weld say to thee.
Say on, say on, Sir Aldingar,
Say thou on and vnto me.

I can let you now see one of [the] greiuos[est] sights
That euer Christen King did see:
Our Queene hath chosen a new new loue,
She will haue none of thee;

If shee had chosen a right good Knight
The lesse had beene her shame,
But she hath chosen a Lazar man
Which is both blinde and lame.

If this be true, thou Aldingar,

That thou dost tell to me,
Then will I make thee a rich Knight
Both of gold and fee.

But if it be false, Sir Aldingar,
That thou doest tell to me,
Then looke for noe other death
But to be hangd on a tree.
Goe with me, saide our comly king,
This Lazar for to see.

When the King he came into the queenes chamber,
Standing her bed befor,
There is a lodly lome, says Harry King,
For our dame Queene Elinor!

If thou were a man, as thou art none,
Here thou sholdest be slaine;
But a paire of New gallowes shall be bult,
Thoust hang on them soe hye;

And fayre fyer there salbe bett,
And brent our Queene salbee.
Forth then walked our comlye King,
And mett with our comly Queene.

Saies, God you saue, our Queene, Madam,
And Christ you saue and see!
Heere you haue chosen a new new loue
And you will haue none of mee.

If you had chosen a right good Knight
The lesse had beene your shame,
But you haue chosen a lazar man
That is both blind and lame.

Euer alacke, said our comly Queene,
Sir Aldingar is false to mee;
But euer alacke, said our comly Queene,
Euer alas, and woe is mee!

I had thought sweuens had neuer been true,
I haue prooued them true at the last;
I dreamed in my sweauen on thursday at eueninge
In my bed wheras I lay,

I dreamed the grype and a grimlie beast
Had carryed my crowne away,
My gorgett and my Kirtle of golde
And all my faire heade geere;

How he weld haue worryed me with his tush
And borne me into his nest:
Saving there came a litle hawk
Flying out of the East,

Saving there came a litle Hawke
Which men call a Merlion;
Vntill the ground he stroke him downe,
That dead he did fall downe.

Giffe I were a man, as I am none,
A battell I weld proue,
I weld fight with that false traitor;
Att him I cast my gloue!

Seing I am able noe battell to make,
You must grant me, my leege, a Knight
To fight with that traitor, Sir Aldingar,
To maintaine me in my right.

Ile glue thee forty dayes, said our King,
To seeke thee a man therin;
If thou find not a man in forty dayes,
In a hott fyer thou shall brenn.

Our Queene sent forth a Messenger,
He rode fast into the South,
He rode the countryes through and through
Soe far vnto Portsmouth;
He cold find never a man in the South country
That weld fight with the Knight soe keene.

The Second messenger the Queen forth sent
Rode far into the east,
But (blessed be God made sunn and moone)
He sped then all of the best.

As he rode then by one riuer side
There he mett with a litle Child;
He seemed noe more in a mans likenesse
Then a child of four yeeres old.

He askt the Queenes Messenger how far he rode,
Loth he was him to tell;
The litle one was offended att him,
Bid him adew, farwell!

Said, Turne thou againe, thou Messenger,
Greete our Queene well from me;
When Bale is art hiest, boote is art next,
Helpe enough there may bee!

Bid our queene remember what she did dreame
In her bedd wheras shee lay:
Shee dreamed the grype and the grimly beast
Had carryed her crowne away,

Her gorgett and her Kirt[l]e of gold,
Alsoe her faire head geere.
He weld haue werryed her with his tushe
And borne her into his nest;

Saving there came a litle hawke,
Men call him a merlyon,
Vntill the ground he did strike him downe
That dead he did fall downe.

Bidd the queene be merry att her hart,
Euermore light and glad;
When bale is art hiest, boote is at next,
Helpe enoughe there shalbe [had].

Then the Queenes messenger rode backe,
A gladed man then was hee;
When he came before our Queene,
A gladd woman then was shee.

Shee gaue the Messenger twenty pound
O lord, in gold and fee;
Saies, Spend and spare not while this doth last,
Then feitch thou more of me.

Our Queene was put in a tunne to burne,
She thought no thing but death.
They were ware of the litle one
Came ryding forth of the East

With, Mu []
A louelie child was hee;
When he came to that fier
He light the Queene full nigh.

Said, Draw away these brands of fire
Lie burning before our Queene,
And feitch me hither Sir Aldingar
That is a knight soe keene.

When Aldingar see that litle one
Full litle of him hee thought;
If there had beene halfe a hundred such
Of them he weld not haue wrought.

Hee sayd, Come hither Sir Aldingar,
Thou see-must as bigge as a fooder;
I trust to God, ere I haue done with thee,
God will send to vs auger.

Saies, The first stroke thats giuen, Sir Aldingar,
I will glue vnto thee,
And if the second glue thou may,
Looke then thou spare not mee.

The litle one pulld forth a well good sword,
I-wis itt was all of guilt;
It cast light there over that feild,
It shone soe all of guilt.

He stroke the first stroke att Aldingar,
He stroke away his leggs by his knee;
Sayes, Stand vp, stand vp, thou false traitor,
And fight vpon thy feete;
For and thou thriue as thou begins,
Of a height wee salbe meete.

A preist, a preist, sayes Aldingar,
Me for to houzle and shriue!
A preist, a preist, sayes Aldingar,
While I am a man liuing a-liue!

I weld haue laine by our comlie Queene,
To it shee weld neuer consent;
I thought to haue betrayd her to our King,
In a fyer to haue had her brent.

There came a lame Lazar to the Kings gates,
A lazar both blind and lame;
I tooke the lazar vpon my back,
In the Queenes bed I did him lay.

I bad him lie still, Lazar, where he lay,
Looke he went not away;
I wold make him a whole man and a sound
In two homes of a day.

Euer alacke, sayes Sir Aldingar,
Falsing neuer doth well;
Forgiue, forgiue me, Queene, Madam,
For Christs loue forgiue me!
God forgaue his death, Aldingar,
And freely I forgiue thee.

Now take thy wife, thou King Harry,
And lone her as thou shold;
Thy wiffe shee is as true to thee
As stone that lies on the castle wall.

The Lazar vnder the gallow tree
Was a pretty man and small
The Lazar vnder the gallow tree
Was made steward in king Henerys hall.

Child #59

Arthurian overtones: Guenivere was found with Lancelot in her room and sentenced to burn unless a champion would fight for her (trial by combat). Lancelot came at the last minute and saved her from the fire. Also note the merlin hawk. Child finds parallels to every Scandinavian tradition, Spanish, German, etc., but does not mention Arthur.

From The Oxford Book of Ballads by Kinsley. Child mentions Percy's Reliques (1765) and Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1803). The spelling is as it appears in Kinsley. SOF