Lady Hartley's Lament

Verse

"Rise, rise, stand to arms," cried bold Captain Hartley, "'Tis the morn and 'tis the hour, dress you now right smartly."

Chorus

Lips smile no more, heart laughs no more; the lady waits forever.

Rise, rise, stand to arms, cried bold Captain Hartley, 'Tis the morn and 'tis the hour, dress you now right smartly.

See mist on the plain, shot with glint of metal, Sharpen swords and string your bows, eat well from the kettle.

Lips smile no more, heart laughs no more; The lady waits forever.

Ease cold from your limbs, clean and oil your armour, Though the day be chilly now, 'twill too soon be warmer.

Hoofbeats faint I hear, as the foe draws nearer, Were you all my own blood sons, I could not love you dearer.

CHORUS

Last night as I slept, I dreamt I saw my lady, Wearing black and weeping low, by the stream so shady.

Nine score at muster call, cheer your hearts, my yeomen, Closer now the sounds of war, we soon shall see our foemen.

CHORUS

Yonder, up the slope, four armoured horsemen riding, And at their backs are hundreds more, the mist no longer hiding.

Archers, bend your bows, men-at-arms, stand boldly, The enemy so thickly come, it makes my blood run coldly.

CHORUS

Gentles, we'll not sing, of pain and death and sorrow — Of that company of men, not one did greet the morrow.

LADY HARTLEY'S LAMENT

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This song is a good running mate for "The Brave and Bonny Host", the song which James chose to accompany his article. I felt that "Lady Hartley's Lament" deserved inclusion also, despite being written by the same person who wrote the article. So I insisted.

The song typifies James' category "original songs describing situations or events (usually imaginary) set in the real Middle Ages". Its sombre tone contrasts markedly with the patriotic bravado of "The Brave and Bonny Host". James says that in writing the song he was "lightly inspired, mostly in matters of atmosphere" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel The White Company.