

Life of the Spirit

Volume IV

DECEMBER 1949

Number 42

OUR BLESSED LADY'S LULLABY¹



Be still sweet Babe, refrain thy tears
though banished from thy native soil;
so soon alas, in tender years
to foreign soil enforced to toil,
through Herod's rage constrained to fly.
Be still sweet Babe with lullaby;
 Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,
 Be still sweet Babe with lullaby.

Thy power is more than Herod's might,
thy wisdom far beyond his guile,
thy only beck would put to flight
thy furious foes, though for a while
thy meekness doth vouchsafe to fly.
Be still sweet Babe with lullaby;
 Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,
 Be still sweet Babe with lullaby.

Thy course is yet but now begun.
Thy wondrous deeds foretold before
require a longer race to run.
Thy life must draw to suffer more
before thy hour thou shalt not die.
Be still sweet Babe with lullaby ;
 Sing lullaby, sing lullaby,
 Be still sweet Babe with lullaby.

¹ This lullaby is taken from a collection (*MS. Eng. poet.* b. 5.) of Catholic verse, hymns and carols made in an old account book in penal times in about the year 1650. It includes some of Blessed Robert Southwell's poems two of which appear in only one other MS. Amidst a great deal of doggerel, a few poems on our Lady in euphemistic style are worth quoting. There are in addition some Catholic ballads which also appear in a British Museum Catholic collection, *MS. Addit.* 15,225 (published by Rollins in *Old English Ballads*).

C.K.