

pensable in her blanket. What a terrible shock to us! We had never even conceived the idea of leaving our enclosure; persuaded that sooner than violate it we had better allow ourselves to be massacred within its walls, and then we had such firm trust in the Sacred Heart. Urgent reasons, however, compelled us to adopt the course recommended. How shall I describe our anguish on leaving the monastery . . . our cells . . . ! We were so much upset that we forgot to take what was necessary, and ended by taking the wrong things. As for our red habits and our light white shoes, it was impossible to go through the town in these. It was equally impossible to find a vehicle of any description. One of the Sisters found a remnant of dark blue baize by means of which some of us were able to cover our habits. The novices reassumed their worldly attire, but we all retained our coifs. Our *tourières* and others lent skirts, capes, etc.—certainly a more motley gathering would be hard to find. We were so perturbed, however, that we gave little thought to our appearance.

In the streets people gathered in groups asking what Order of nuns we were, but even in the socialistic quarters of the city we only met with kindness and compassion. The route was exceedingly arduous for our Sisters, totally unaccustomed to long walks, amongst them being several who had been confined to their beds for months. The more robust members of the community carried packages containing the sacred vessels, but they were soon overcome by their burdens. At last the nephew of one of our Sisters found a little cart on which we placed our luggage.

Thanking God for His Providential Help, we proceeded on our way, meeting numbers of people and carts coming from Wavre (the place where we were to take refuge) to Malines, where they hoped to be in safety. Poor people how frightened they were to meet us leaving the city!

We reached Wavre about 5 o'clock. In the distance we could hear the Germans bombarding Malines. A great disappointment awaited us at the convent. We thought our chaplain carried the pyx, containing the Blessed Sacrament, but on our arrival we discovered that in the general flurry of departure the sacristan had locked up the tabernacle key. In the midst of the bombardment, the chaplain, accompanied by the sacristan and the servant, was obliged to return to our convent for the Blessed Sacrament and, although they went in a carriage, they only returned at 9.30 p.m. The Ursulines received us most kindly, but did not hide from us the fact that we were no safer in their house than elsewhere, as they themselves expected to have to flee at any moment. Moreover, as we were not expected, they had not the necessary provisions for our community of fifty Sisters, and there was no chance of procuring them. Next day the Superioress of the Ursulines requested our Rev. Mother to allow us to change our attire, as our red habits attracted too much attention. We acceded to her desire, though it certainly was a sacrifice for us to discard our holy habit. Our Rev. Mother encouraged us, saying that it was by our demeanour, and not by our dress, that we were to show ourselves true Redemptoristines. The Superioress of the Ursulines, our chaplain, and our Rev. Mother then made arrangements to facilitate, as far as possible, our regular community life. The library, a room appertaining to the chapel, served us as choir; the canonical hours were recited in the students' refectory, which we also used as community room. This was a great change for us. At all hours of the day and night officers and men were coming and going. It was impossible to sleep at night, as the passing of the Belgian patrols kept us constantly on the *qui vive*, and we never felt safe. During the day the Zeppelins were frequently seen flying over the convent. As far as food was concerned, we were certainly accustomed to privations, but it was hard at times to be told, just as we were going to supper, that on account of the fresh arrivals of wounded, we could only have half a slice of dry bread each. We suffered, not

for ourselves, but for so many of our Sisters whose frail health was likely to be completely shattered by so many privations.

Towards noon on Sunday, September 27, we heard a violent report; the soldiers reassured us, saying it only meant the testing of some new artillery. These detonations continued all day, causing the entire convent to vibrate. They were terrible to hear, and continued next day, too. About 2 p.m. we were hastily summoned, and were told it was the Ursuline Convent that the Germans had been aiming at for the last two days. Belgian soldiers came and placed their cannons in the convent garden. We were obliged to flee to Lierre, which meant a walk of four hours in the midst of these horrible reports. Just as we were leaving, one particularly loud was heard, so violent that we were almost paralysed with fear. Our chaplain exhorted us not to lose confidence, and falling on our knees we received a special blessing. We departed for Lierre more reassured, our brave soldiers in front of us telling us to creep along the walls and to lie down on the ground when we heard the more violent detonations. The road was thronged with Belgian troops who warned us of the danger, and we met hundreds of fugitives, the peasants leading their cattle, which of course made the road even more perilous. After a walk of two hours some of the Sisters, literally exhausted, declared their inability to go any further; others showed the palms of their hands all cut and sore from the strings of the heavy packages. To make things worse, some of the Sisters lost their way in the crowd and had to walk back, which increased their fatigue; others saw shells fall a few steps away from them.

At last Providence sent a curate, disguised as a layman, in our way; he got one of his parishioners to lend us his cart, and take our luggage. Thus relieved, we continued our walk and arrived towards evening at our destination (Lierre). The good nuns had already

Taken in Four Communities, and had, moreover, the depot for military accoutrements, etc. They received us with open arms, and we felt at home immediately, to our dear Rev. Mother's great relief. Our chaplain informed us that before deciding to cross to England, we would be able to remain there for a few days' rest. Though completely exhausted, needless to say, we hastened to the chapel and then, as the Ursulines had to watch that night, we were able to rest in their beds. During the night the Ursuline community from Wavre, numbering 150, arrived at the convent. They had hoped to remain in Wavre by hiding in their cellars, but our soldiers obliged them to leave during the night, and insisted on escorting them out of the enemy's reach. They told us that we had not left Wavre a quarter of an hour when the dormitory where we packed our luggage caught fire, and a bomb fell in the room occupied by one of our nuns. I need not tell our gratitude to Divine Providence for our escape.

At breakfast next morning one or two of our Sisters declared they had heard cannon during the night. We laughed it off, assuring them they had been dreaming. After breakfast, the Sister Procuratrix made a list of the things strictly necessary for each of us. Some had their shoes and stockings worn to shreds; others suffered bitterly from the cold, and at Wavre it had been impossible to procure anything except at exorbitant prices. We had hardly begun to arrange our rooms when the detonations recommenced. Terrified, the Sisters made inquiries, and were told that Lierre was being bombarded. In the meantime our procuratrix, Sister M. Alphonse, returned, being unable to buy anything: the population was fleeing and the church was on fire. At 10 o'clock we went to the station, where trains were being organised. There was a special train for the nuns, for this time we numbered over 200. We had hardly taken our seats when other fugitives arrived, and expected us to give up our places to their wives and children, whereupon the more robust of our Sisters went outside on the platform, where they remained all day amongst the men. We spent