Letter written by Elsie McDermid to her mother while in Dublin to perform at the Gaiety Theatre with the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company, Easter 1916
Easter Tuesday
25th April

My dearest Mother——

We are living in stirring times. I am writing this to be posted if there is any post office left I will keep it all I know if it will go. We arrived safe to time on Sunday. But had a very rough crossing & Daisy's brother & Clint (the toadly Anna) met us at Kingstown with the motor. All was peace & quiet. Well I didn't get up until 11.30 as I felt rather sick with the boat & when Daisy was dressing she drew my attention to a body
7 men marching down the square with rifle. She said here is some of the daily demis of volunteers. Well we dressed went out about 12:30 to 1. I went up Spoffot street towards the theatre before going to the Shelborne for lunch. This is a plan of the places of Mr. Pelly Hotel. St. Stephen's Green.
32. MERRION SQUARE.
DUBLIN.

Well as we got up Grafton St we heard shots — Daisy said there's the haggis procuring in Stephens Green (a very pretty little park quite small), when we got up to the corner there we found a lot of our people & a crowd who said the place was in the hands of the "Sinn Feiners" (Shinn Fayners pronounced) then they were with fixed bayonets & digging trenches in the Green! We said we were going to the Shelborne & they told not to go as a man had just been shot killed on the steps. So we saw the ambulance tearing up & had passed us. Well we went to the theatre & then thought we'd better get home. The next we heard from Lyttton staying at the Lyndsham that they'd taken the post office in Sackville
street acut off all communications so they have the G.R. off in their hands as is the Westland Row station in the line up. After lunch got on to the theatre by phone, the girl said they were all shut up in the theatre. If I rang up about 6 she'd tell me if there would be a show (all the seats were sold out). Well the next that happened was Miss Harman was here in a car & it was commandeered by 5 doctors in the square off to Reggan Bush on the left of my sketch to attend to wounded in that place they've taken Bolans flour mills are entrench. There well the car came back if they [the Sinn Feiners] wouldn't let them pick up the wounded of men of the G.R., all national defence were lying wounded on the road.
[Handwritten text not transcribed]
Green, & Daisy, I took our courage in our hands & went to the Square. The police asked if there was martial law, the inspector said no, but there might be. I asked if it was safe to go up, he said it'd be alright. Going, but there would be dirty work before night if the military were called out. So back we came. I got on to the theatre, & the message from Bellamy was yes, you must come there will be a show. This was about 6. The teams were all stopped early in the day, so we set off to walk. Daisy wouldn't let me go alone (we found an outside car, farming car) he wouldn't take us at first when we told him where to, but we said we'd go round & he'd drop us off on St. John's Street so we went up behind (where I've put this.) well we came out at the other end of King Street near the
We were stopped by a crowd who prayed us ‘for the love of God lady don’t go down in the char?’ They were all round a taxi which had just come along. They’d shot a lady and gentleman in it. They were in the hospital – you could see the bullet hole. The smashed glass. The taxi was full of blood. So we got off the car and walked down Rynagh St. to the theatre – we found the local manager of the theatre talking to Johnston. He said he wouldn’t open the theatre. It was just waiting for Bellamy to tell him. He said by about 4 a.m. there’d be thousands killed in Dublin, many with blood. We had a bit of talking and told him it wasn’t safe for us to be in the streets. We waited for Bellamy. He said you can all go home. We’ll have no show. I was the only principal who’d had the liver...
to turn up! Well everything was
green except one of the
people in for the day who
couldnt get home so on one of the
maids came home and told us 2 girls
were shot near her in Sackville
street and they were digging trenches
there. We went to bed and then just
as we were dozing off about 12:30
it began with what a night!
You would have thought you
were at the war. Shot after shot -
volley after volley. Until
about 3 then we slept until
about 4:30. Then heard the tramp
tramp + out of bed we got-
a beautiful morning. There were
hundreds of soldiers all marching
along in the square with fixed
bayonets guards were posted
near us + they stayed about.
louls we heard great work on the green--bugle calls
then about 8 they all came back past our house on towards
the bottom (ugh there's more shots now)

52 MERRION SQUARE, 
DUBLIN.

& if firing
then about 8 they all came
back past our house on towards
the bottom (ugh there's more shots now)

of crotchon Street. It's noon now.
10:30 I'm having my breakfast
in bed having had about 2 hrs
sleep. It has been very quiet
since 8 although the streets are
full of people wandering about.
What a night! Have we had
the whole square has been up
with heads out of windows. It
sounded awful in the dark
all that firing. However the
soldiers will have them in the
end. But there'll be a lot of
deaths I'm afraid. Nobody


knows what it's all for! Daisy and I are going out for a little walk but we won't venture too far.

We are all wondering if you have the news in England by wireless - because you can't write or phone they're cutting off all those calls. It's funny to hear the curries on them - "May the curse of God be on them" - may they be all fed by the morning. They say there are 20,000 out who will start in different parts of the country of Germany is at the bottom of it. I think the head of them is a man called O'Neill a
I have no news from the University.

Well done about ‘so’ cramp—so will end now— I hope you receive this. I think the only danger for us is a stray shot.

I was about finished up last night with the strain of the day on top of the road crossing. I wasn’t ill on board but felt it yesterday.

With much love to all.

Your loving,

Elkie.

I don’t suppose we’ll play tonight.
There's one thing the common people in the street are against the ruffians—we were afraid they would riot when the military was called out. They say they are bringing up big guns from the Curragh (54 miles away) so they are going to blow them up out of the Post Office.

The Sinn Féin men have 10 maxims guns in the green. We saw a roller load of ammunition going in yesterday morning!
32 Merrion Square, Dublin.

Tuesday.

I just heard that there has been tremendous losses to soldiers at the green of the S.F. and winning have taken possession of Bucknell St. I have machine guns, bombs, and grenades belonging to the military.
The Siege of Dublin continued.

Tuesday, later.

Daisy and I walked up to the Green before lunch but could see nothing—no sign of any soldiers. We walked down Bayott Street towards the Shelbourne Hotel. I could see an overturned cart and 2 tram cars—a grey motor all standing. All afternoon there had been shots from the Green—Bolans Mills behind us at Westland Row or Sackville Street.

While I was lying down during afternoon heard 2 heavy
Sun shots ether a regular fire on Sunday, behind us we hear it is the artillery arrived with big guns from England &a war ship in the river & they've blown down a house with a gun on topology to a house called Henry James—occupied by the Sinn Feiners—about 6 papers published with 2d proclamation—martial law—anybody out at their own risk so I have no thought of going to theatre. no movement at all until 10 o'clock when shots sounded out in the square we rushed upstairs putting out all lights. there seems to be a packet at the side of...
Our house (Holles Street) leading down to Liberty Hall (headquarters of 3.4.5) & we heard someone challenged. There was a fierce lot of firing until about 11 all in the direction of the Green, Bolands Mills on our left & the firing we thought was in the square must have been from our soldiers on top of the Shelbourne which they have barricaded with mattresses etc. The military also have Trinity College wall probably try to open a post office in the college green. They have O'Connell's Bridge leading up Sackville Street & so Layton & Billygton & Lewis up in the Gresham are isolated.

Wednesday morning— slept the whole night from about 12. How 8 o'clock tremendous bug fire & crashes & falling buildings. We have been up listening a snow may have been with our tea things she & co. have been to mass & then went up over O'Connells Bridge over to Nelson's Pillar opposite the P.O.
A German force came at Cook & Tolson. She must go back or he'll shoot. Many told us Cook said 'Oh say she who's coming for you if they had a gun she come back all my back streets were not allowed back over the Bridge. All the windows are out. Houses & 3 shops are burned to the ground other 2 a boot shop & a sweet shop absolutely sacked by the people we heard last night the shops were on fire & these two have seen it. People seem to be going about as usual but you can't get up that part of the Town at all. A Daisy & I are going to buy to get to the theatre as our laundry is there & we have no blouses clean. They say the military are going to starve them out of the Green all streets are blocked & barbed wire so that no one can
They'll be in the thick of it. She's got enough food for 6 months they say. Daring has gone now to talk to Jimmy Frank's chauffeur to get the latest news. He is a Sinn Feiner but he hasn't gone out with them. I say he's probably a spy!

I expect Lyttleton's boys are out; they are stationed here in Irish Rifles, the S.P.'s have been out since Monday morning. One of their officers was killed Monday. He's to be buried here tomorrow. Sir Thomas Mills hasn't been home since Monday morning. He has phoned Lady M. They are in the thick of it behind the G.P.O.
the Richmond Hospital
It was considerable by them

us a rest last night or we should all be wrecks today!

Just heard that the guns at
8 o'clock levelled Liberty
Hall. The military is in
possession of Stephens Green
and the Sinn Féin escaped the
amount of dead lying in the
Green appalling. No news in
the paper that is published
Irish Times except all public
houses to be closed except between
2 and 5 o'clock.

Wednesday afternoon
This morning Daisy & I took an
outside car & went towards Grafton
Street met Gordon & Granville etc.
who advised us to walk we found
woods at the corner of Grafton Tce
Connell Street Australian soldiers
on top of the College. We saw a
wounded Tommy with a revolver
in his hand accompanied by an officer
evidently on his way to hospital.
60 of our people isolated at 12
Overbury in the midst of the
worst of it. 500 soldiers had
just passed before me for them.
Went up to College Green which is
evidently emptied of the S. F. T.
all we saw was a horrible dead
horse killed by them! Came in for
lunch have had it 9 am not
writing at open window listening
to the fighting on our left at
Bolands Mills. They say 5000
soldiers are coming in from
Kingsdowne or there are shots
being fired from 0 house in
Grafton Street 100 yards from us etc.
is most exciting. - Daisy now at
below. Shan just come in.
Mr. Bellamy told me this morning
Johnston was gone to Kingston
they expect they'll take us back as soon
as possible. Shots are being fired all the
time but we are quite accustomed
to them now!

Thursday morning
We had a terrible afternoon
yesterday. All day
long the soldiers bombarded
a house or two in Delan William
Place within about a hundred
houses distance from us. It
was simply awful as the soldiers
crippled the bridge over the
Canal they were potted by the
S.T. & we could see them out,
The V.A.D. women carried them on stretchers. The slaughter was dreadful. 50 wounded, 30 killed. My officers, Killen, Derby, Notto, men and staff, then about 11 o'clock went out. Suddenly heard cheering. Daisy and I rushed down towards it. Saw a crowd running. They had one of the S.F's. who'd jumped to his life out of a house. I was close to him as he took off his puttees. The crowd helped him to escape a boy of 14 or so while faced with a black with guns and simply terrified. Then we heard a terrific report. Crash! The house was down. On fire. It burned all night. Out now I think. Well we went down watching the fire when cheering began. We saw 6 soldiers at the double, led by a
man in my to Captain Burke home
on sick leave, these men he planted
in Temple's house. We came in
short, the door hadn't been in more
than 10 minutes when there was a
knock, we said who's there -
open please. It's Burke. We
were landed with 4 Tommy's and
then 6 more came. They were
up on the roof. 10 of them. 3
others one in a back bedroom one
in a top laundry room in the
back drawing room (1st floor).
It was quiet enough for us to
sleep till 3 o'clock when they
brought the 6 Tommy's up to
them on the roof. We slept till
8. Have been out getting
cigars for our Tommies. How
the whole afternoon they are
shooting from our roof at
Some snakes they are on 

in our house. We go I talk to the 
Tommy and give them information as 
they know nothing of the city at all 

There is a huge fire near the 
Nelson Pillar we can see from the 
back arrow we are watching 
at the front a hospital a few 
doors up from Dr. Dempsey. They've 
taken a house or crowds of mattresses, 
blankets etc. Red Cross workers are 
coming in. I am about bewildered 

with this excitement. It is funny 
that every house being stormed by 
VAD's and things taken out. 

Daring has just gone across with 
blankets etc. Nothing going on just 
now. There are sentinels all along 
our street. I at every few houses
Thursday midnight I was called away to the back. The tower of the distillery blown down the S. It's had a big gun there were smashed too. It was terrifying to see the tower flying into the air. Falling, we were in terror lest the S.F. would point their gun on us as we being right in their line of fire. The artillery soon had it down. The green flag with it. There seemed to be snipers in the houses on our side and the commies kept running at them — the whole side of our 29 is covered with soldiers. We talk to the Nank on the steps. Capt. Burke brought Capt. Shepherd of the 5th Staffs to see our roof. He was awfully nice, said goodbye to his men on the roof now they are separated from their batt. All the men outside are 6th Batt Staffs. The sniper
terrible all evening. We had great excitement. Feeding the Somnies. I came to sleep in our bathroom now 9 o'clock. Found they have slept all night—we slept from 12 till 9. This morning the soldiers were outside all night. We could hear them challenging people coming up Holbe Street. They went let a coal pass & when the milk cart was held up the Somnies came in here for our jug! They say the North side of the city is burning. There are no batteries there. The bread & milk vans run risks of being shot. They are still supplies. Here it seems terrible that a whole Poor should be kept from advancing because of 1 or 2 men like this. One Capt. Telled us he’s not been flogged for 5 nights. They are all footsore & sweaty. We’ve been hanging out of the window since 9 now we are getting dressed. The city is absolutely destroyed. The
before last night was the last D. Bread & C. we think quite near to 12 Eden Quay where 6 of our people are - I do hope they are safe. We hear the soldiers in Frank Coppinger's room above our heads - hope they don't come in here before we are dressed! We hear the whole of Grafton street is looted by the poor people.

12 o'clock Friday midday

The North Staffs are now here & are running past the alley where we have seen none of our men. The men S. Staffs on our roof are now separated from their regiment & the snipers are at the side of S. opposite to us now. I have seen a man on Miss McDonnel's roof myself the guard at our door has seen him too - but he has disappeared again - the S.Y's
have been firing direct at our house from the convent opposite. There are 1000 of men waiting to advance up here to get to Westland Row - that battle will be worth watching. The men are now moving up at the double. I am writing on my dressing table. There's a man at a house in Hollis St. Sam Cass is giving the signals to all these people. Now they've started firing opening using a whole machine gun (other men), there's a whole company outside with machine guns loose guns they call them. We all expect the one starvation rations soon. Give me a bottle of malt!!

A Corporal has just been for the men in the bathroom tells us they have got 150 S. X men will be marching some part
Saturday morning,

What a night we have had. God preserve us we'll all be finished off before long. Last night about 8 an officer came and asked permission (save the mark) to put a machine gun in the hall. We of course it arrived in 10 journeys. We brought 7 men to Corporal. They all lay in the hall + one at a back landing window + the next at a lavatory window + then 6 on the roof. We were told our safest place was within 2 walls of the street so we all camped on the back staircase below the man at the landing window we took up our position about 9 o'clock. Stayed till 12.30 there. All the time they were firm at each other off our roof + when
the fire from the landing above us. It was dreadful. At 12.30 Daisy and I retired to the landing outside our bedroom and brought out rugs. Blankets for the two coats lay down dressed on them. We slept at intervals. But the commotion coming in, quite a lot of all around was terrible at about 12 o'clock if we had tea & took in our blankets thinking we'd understand & go to bed for a little when the terrible row started at the front. Daisy & I dropped flat & sheltered behind dressing table & big chair. We could hear bullets hitting the wall & then thro' the open window we could see 3, 8 & 9 they shot a woman. A soldier opposite & I watched him carry in the poor fellow. Our hall door was wide open & the machine gun in position but they haven't fired it yet, when it does & if we're all shrunk from our nerves are getting a little bit upset although my own
we are quite accustomed to the rifle shots. We had a frequent
fire at the window of the Tommies all plat opposite our house
facing into the gardens. There's a run up now - they're fetching
a gun Daisy says. The streets at one side (Holles st) is all
barbecued with big boxes full of clay. The sea's out of the
gardens. I am sitting on the floor behind the bed writing this.
Daisy is doing her hair. I've just had a lovely bath and had
got out in a hurry as they started at the back of the bathroom
has a big window. I could hear their bullets whizzing. The side of
our house even the lavatories are full of soldiers.
The artillery are coming up now - no it's not - it is ammunition
simply flying up. My! what shocks we are getting!
The latest is that the soldiers are bombing Dr. Dempsey’s opposite. He went off & left it empty the night they put in the soldiers. They say they are German soldiers in it.

11.30 Saturday.
A whole trainload has arrived now - field kitchens pack horses, officers on horses, ammunition, food - thank goodness. One has no milk & bread in this house!

1 o’clock. We have now the Lincoln in the house. They are going to people in Hollow Street. Otherwise it is fairly quiet - we have had the officers in who is trying to get us an order to go out & find food. We are going to have the only meat we believe of 3.30 today!

Have just seen the whole where a bullet came into here through the bedroom - it came in when the poor fellow was shot outside.
I went thru a curtain was bored
in a plaster cell wall. The parent
in front of our door is drenched in
blood.

Sunday morning.
There was nothing fresh at all
last night. We went to bed
without undressing altogether-
& slept on mattresses on the
landing outside our bedrooms.
We had a good night’s sleep but
are waiting for to day to pass—we
slept a little more this morning but
have got no bread for 5 days.
The Red + have just brought 6
wounded up Holles Street. One
had the Volunteer uniform but the
others were only in civilian dress
The first was dead! We are getting
heartily sick of this, I am knitting
socks for something to do.

7-30 Sunday
Order suddenly given to
stop firing - 104 men
Bolands have surrendered. We have watched them march up Graton Street now they are being searched in the road - their rifles on the ground + our men are fetching up their equipment etc.

It was great to hear the cheers of the Tommies - 'Good old Lincoln' etc. The men carried a white flag + 'hands up.' A big car has just gone past with a soldier first on a motor cycle, 2 or 3 officers in the car, 2 'Saint Finess' in green slouch hats (like Boer hats). I wonder if they are leaders + where they are
being taken. It is not over yet - but we ought to be thankful for this little relief - we have been out in the street for the first time for 2 days.

Meal time 3.30 just going to eat ham or something I talked to a Tommy who has been through Boltands Mills they both took more prisoners. Have heard 600 have been taken today.

No sooner had the soldiers been homeward scattered on different guard duties than they started again ramping. They shot one woman who had taken tea to the Tommies. We were talking to the driver of the Ambulance (Sir John Arnold's chauffeur)
He told us Later Iraw is levelled so I do hope Our people got away. The Speakeham is still safe he says. He has his wife saw us perform at Manchester.

10 o'clock - we have just taken a photo or about a dozen Tommy men with an officer asleep in the hall - 2 more are in the bathroom + some on the roof. There is not a sound now. I do hope we have a quiet night. We have no bread in the house at all so hope we get some tomorrow.

1st May Monday.

We all slept on landing last night and had a quiet night - there seems to be very little going on just now. We got half a loaf this morning (there are 30 in the house).
Have given Mother's address to Tommie. Send notice to his people to send a card. I am well hope it gets through. Just seen a car pass with some officers - a bullet hole in the window papered over. It is such beautiful weather all this week - lots of sun shine each day. Going to wash my hair now for something to do. Have heard that there is to be no more fighting - the S. F.'s have surrendered all round. Sir Thos. Myles got us some bread & margarine - but we couldn't eat the margarine it was horrible. Had more soldiers sleeping in the hall gone on guard on the roof. The supply still goes on - sleeping in our bedroom - very quiet.
Tuesday morning
Had good night—woke up to find crowds of soldiers coming in with platoons. Got an Irish times which publishes the fall of the I.R. Revolt. We can go out. Daisy had bread—normalade for breakfast.
Went out on an outside car to Theatre—
Saw Gordon & he says we are to go to Town immediately—met Budge Lunkers—Their house 12 Eden way completely levelled—Armit & Smith & the men also Turnbull & Miss Bull—have nothing left but what they stand in except Budge Lunkers—found her basket in the ruins. They spent 4 days in Police Station 16 in one cell only bread & water for 2 days.
We then went to Jacksonville & Sneen
Saw such a sight—only the 4 walls of the post office left—The D.B.C. Metropolitan Imperial Hotel all levelled. We tried to go up to the Albermar but couldn't get up. Then went along Eden
back to "Chevy Hall", which is wrecked - up back streets to the estuary - we found Billington who is very shaky with all the sherry chase he says Mr. Carle is going to pay us 2 salaries - we may go to London Opera House instead - Cork Breakfast - I personally feel like a holiday instead - have caught cold through sleeping on the floor. Saw Frank Steward who took 2 letters for us to England. Came back had a jolly good lunch at the Hibernian - came back for tea then walked round to Haddington Row & Bagott Street Bridge - the houses there are saddled with snow & the pavements covered in blood.

Wednesday.
Everything quiet - last night saw Bellamy - saw me pass by & put us away tomorrow.

Thursday.
Slepting in bed today - Daring done to theatre for doctor - Bellamy says company to be at station by 2 - o'clock - I must stay behind - it's very nice - says I'd better not cross before Monday still some shipping round here - sunny.
Monday morning May 5th

Very wet day. Letters from mother posted 4th April from Marie Cooper, Belfast posted 24th. I feel my cold better but ache all over with coughing. Daisy gone out to post letter to Gordon for me to go to Bank. Everything seems more normal yesterday & today some trams are running.

Mother’s letter “open by censor.”
Elsie M. McDermid
Greenbank, Slin
Yorkshire

Stair of D'oyly Carte No. 1 Co. during
World War I.