

## Casualty Clearing Station

### Letter from New Zealand Sister

Hotel De L'Estrecn,  
Cannes,  
France, 21/12/17.

I came to France last May, and went to Amiens, but only had a few days there, and came up north with the unit.

I started duty in the theatre, and after six very busy weeks—we were there for the Messines "push"—I left for a casualty clearing station in Belgium. We, Sister McBeth and I, came away with surgical teams. A team consists of a surgeon, an anæsthetist, a sister, and an orderly. The



Sisters at a casualty clearing station, France. Tin hat and gas mask parade. Sister M. Davies (N.Z.) with blurred face at left.

team Sister McBeth was with was made up from our own staff, but the one I was with was rather a mixed one. The anæsthetist and sister were New Zealanders, and the surgeon and orderly were English. The surgeon was a colonel from a British Casualty Clearing Station. First we went to a C.C.S. in Belgium, our team going to No. 10, and the other to No. 17, both British and quite close to each other.

We were only there a few days when we got orders, at 11.30 one night, to proceed at once to another C.C.S. So we had to pack very hurriedly and depart. On these "excursions" one carries all one's belongings, bed, bedding, etc., and the moving is all done by motor ambulance. I hadn't time to let Sister McBeth know that I was moving, and I thought of how surprised

she would be in the morning to hear that we had gone, but I got the surprise, for I was just going off to sleep at our new destination, when sister walked in—her team had been sent also.

We stayed at that C.C.S. for four months and had the most interesting time there. The unit, when we arrived, had only been there four days, and the place was still in a state of chaos; but it was wonderful to see how quickly things were got into order, despite the fact that they had to take in patients the day after they arrived. The whole place, with the exception of the theatre, was under canvas, and, being the middle of summer, we found the life very pleasant. The surrounding country was beautiful, every scrap of land there is cultivated; it was a grand sight to see it when the crops were ready for cutting. The operating theatre was a large wooden building, with light tables. Four teams used to work at once, each surgeon running two tables, so there was no time lost between the cases. The place was well equipped in every way, plenty of instruments and gloves, and all the appliances for operating, and the giving of anæsthetics. As a rule the day teams worked from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., and were then relieved by the night teams, but when there was a great rush of work the day teams would go on working until 12 p.m., and by doing that managed to keep pace with the work. The system of work at the clearing stations is excellent. There are always two or three stations close to each other, one will be receiving patients for twenty-four hours, or perhaps take a certain number, and then the next one will receive; this gives each one the chance to get through all their operations and clear up ready for the next receiving day.

The patients are evacuated almost at once, only those who are too ill to be moved are kept back. We had rather an exciting time whilst there, through the air-raids. The enemy planes were over nearly every clear night, and twice they dropped bombs right in the stations, the second time Sister Kemp—a New Zealander with an English unit—an orderly, and two patients