

**MESSAGE BROADCAST BY DAME KATHERINE JONES, D.B.E., R.R.C., MATRON-IN-CHIEF, Q.A.I.M.N.S., TO THE MIDDLE EAST.**

The following appreciative message was broadcast by the Matron-in-Chief to all members of the Service on Sunday, January 24th last.

I am very glad of this opportunity to speak to all of you serving in the Q.A.I.M.N.S. and T.A.N.S. in the Middle East, and I would like you to know how much our thoughts have been with you in the past few weeks during the advance of the Eighth Army.

We have heard how some of you have advanced with the victorious troops, as far as you were allowed to go, in order that you might have the privilege of caring for the sick and wounded at the earliest opportunity. We know how you have been working at high pressure in the base hospitals, nursing the men of the Armies, not only of the Empire, but those of our Allies. Don't think I have forgotten the difficulties under which you are working. I knew them myself to a lesser degree when I was working on the sand of the Bay of Haifa in 1937 in the rain and the heat. I know, too, the dry heat of Khartoum, and how difficult it is to nurse men of different races, creeds and languages under conditions which are already extremely trying. But I am glad some of your patients have included those valiant fighters from India, whose own Indian Military Nursing Service accompanied them from India, and whom we were able to help after the courageous attack on Keren.

Since 1939 Q.A.I.M.N.S. and T.A.N.S. have been serving in all the war areas, but up to the present the hardest work has fallen on those of you who are in the Middle East and India. So far you have been nearer to the scenes of action, but that privilege is now being shared by your colleagues in the First Army. They, I am sure, would wish me to give you their greetings across that strip of unconquered Africa which still divides you.

I am convinced that whatever calls are made upon you, as State Registered Nurses of Great Britain and the Dominions, you will not fail to use your skill to the utmost and that you will endure whatever is demanded of you. You will continue to serve to the end with that high devotion and sense of duty which is the tradition of the Military Nursing Services and which is expected of every one of you.

I wish you all what we know to be that best of all blessings—good health to carry on your work of healing until your duty no longer keeps you abroad in strange countries—until you will be welcomed home by your friends and your families.

**A SPLENDID RECORD OF NATIONAL SERVICE.**

Army Nursing Sisters have been serving in the Middle East since before 1939; within a month of returning to England from France units were already on their way to Egypt.

In the Middle East they are nursing in all the war areas—Iraq, Persia, Syria, Palestine, in Egypt, and in the Sudan, and, indeed, one could continue all round the

coast of Africa, including East Africa, Mauritius, West Africa and now, North Africa.

They're living under active service conditions in buildings, in wooden huts, in tents with no floors, in native mud huts—specially built for them—in houseboats moored to the banks of the Nile and, in one Casualty Clearing Station in the Western Desert, a sunken tent, concreted, and possessing even a real fireplace was their mess, with staggered rabbit-hole dugouts as sleeping quarters.

They were in Tobruk where laundry was an impossibility, and they were reduced to wearing khaki drill—men's boiler suits or slacks. They have been attached to small units advancing behind the field units as soon as permission could be obtained for them to go forward. Recently they joined a small mobile field hospital, travelling forward with all its staff and equipment in trucks. At the base hospitals, hundreds of State Registered Nurses undertake many specialist duties in theatre work, and all types of nursing, especially of tropical and infectious diseases and psychiatry. And then we should not forget there are the Sisters in the hospital ships who visit all the ports of the Middle East. The Sisters of one such ship were the first women to set foot in Tobruk after many months of siege. One soldier ran out and said to the Matron, "But you're not really a woman," and then stood to attention and saluted her.

I don't know if it is realised that these Army Nursing Sisters work in both fierce heat and bitter cold and, in North Africa, in inches of mud. The rain drips down the tents and they have to nurse in gumboots. In new areas nearly all the nursing is done in tents. It will be readily understood that not many of the buildings left are of much use.

Night duty on active service is an experience never to be forgotten—the black-out, carrying only a storm-lamp from tent to tent, falling over tent ropes, stepping into large puddles, convoys of wounded arriving—a frequent thing at night. The night superintendent's round is almost a voyage of adventure. And added to this there is often the difficulty of language. Nursing being international, every State Registered Nurse realises it is her duty to nurse soldiers—or civilians—of every race and creed. This they have done in this war to an extent never known before.

"The work being done," states the Matron-in-Chief, "by these Military Nursing Sisters—particularly of the Eighth Army—makes me very proud that the Nursing Profession has risen so well to the occasion."

Every Registered Nurse worth her salt is also thrilled to realise the value of the service of their colleagues at every seat of war.

**NURSE REPORTED MISSING AT SEA.**

Official intimation has been received by her parents in Banff that Sister Joan Pitt, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, has been reported missing at sea.

Sister Pitt is 25 years of age and began her nursing career at Aberdeen Sick Children's Hospital. Later, she went to Guy's Hospital, London. She was a State Registered Nurse and State Registered Sick Children's Nurse. She joined the Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service a few months ago.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)