

pitched, trembling voice. "The days of chivalry, it seems, have not altogether fled."

Without an answering word, Skip conducted her through the porch and up the middle aisle to her own little pew just under the pulpit. A fire of surprised stares followed the pair. Lady Wentworth lifted her head from her prayer-book, and her soft eyes grew wide in astonishment. But an understanding look swiftly effaced the surprise when Skip turned to cross the aisle to the Dene Hurst pew. There was a spot of

crowded up to shake hands with Skip, or to take their hats off to him, while the three pupils made haste to slip out into the lane, and steal back to the vicarage, feeling sure that the Vicar would bring home with him the story of their misdoing. Somebody would be safe to tell him. And then—well, they knew of old what a caning from him felt like, and to-morrow they would assuredly know again.

It all came to pass as they expected. After each of the boys had got through a sep-

over the chances of their owners distinguishing themselves, there were the grim realities of deadly perils in the jungle from beasts of prey, or from sudden fever-spells. Dusty, begrimed, and spent, Skip, though brave as a lion, asked himself often, during the weary march up-country, if he had not made a mistake in his choice of a profession.

Before the troops reached their destination, however, these doubts born of fatigue and hunger, perhaps, had vanished. News met the advancing detachment of some further terrible skirmishes in the district on which they were marching. One of the hill tribes had descended on a peaceful community, and savagely fired an entire village. Orders were given to hasten the pursuit and punishment of the cruel marauders. This was a sort of thing Skip comprehended. To defend the weak from the strong befitted the soldier of Christ as well as the wearer of the Queen's uniform. But the hill-men were crafty, and skilfully dodged the British, who grew worn-out and spent. One after another, men fell out by the way, struck down with sickness. A hospital tent was put up, and Skip, of all others, told off to remain behind in charge, as the enemy were lurking in the jungle. Watch over a few fever patients! Sit with folded hands, while his comrades marched away to win promotion and fame! The young officer was faint with disappointment. But the old Skip nature rose up, and he threw himself loyally into his task, repeating a certain line his mother loved:

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

So Skip tended the sick with his own hands, for he was nothing, if not all things.

"He's as good as the doctor himself!" declared the grateful patients. The surgeon had gone on with the force where he would be most needed in the event of a skirmish.

The enforced halt was, however, a severe trial, making the intense heat, the want of sufficient provisions and of water seem harder to bear.

One starless night Skip, heavy with fatigue, was sleeping like a log when one of his troopers shook him violently.

"What is it, man?" drowsily demanded Skip.

"Tent's a-foire, sor!"

It was true. In the silent darkness, the enemy, who were hovering all over the district, had fired the tent containing the sick. In such a tindery climate the fire was the work of a short time. Rushing forward, Skip plunged into the blazing mass.

"Come back, sir," shouted his men, frantically. "Tis madness to try it." But Skip was in and out again, bearing a senseless form in his arms. Again and again, he plunged back, to return out of the flames leading or carrying one after another of the five patients, who were stupefied by the smoke. By that time the fire was over, a tent does not take so long as a house to burn up. Staggering forward, Skip fell into the jungle-grass terribly burned himself.

The rest was a black dream, out of which Skip awoke to find himself in a cool, clean, white bed, with mosquito-curtains drawn round it, and a motherly old ayah sitting watching him. He was in his colonel's own house, at a well-known up-country station. And no wonder, seeing he had been carried unconscious in a litter for days and nights thither, the story of his bravery travelling ahead of him.

Nothing was too good for such a hero; Skip's name was in all men's mouths, and many a heart ached when the doctors failed to save his cruelly burned left arm.

* * * * *

The skirmishes in India are quelled, the



SKIP SHOWS THAT THE DAYS OF CHIVALRY HAVE NOT ALTOGETHER GONE BY.

red on each of his cheeks, for every eye in the church was on him, but the rest of his face was white to the lips and stern-set, and his mother read plainly that her boy had been through a fiery trial.

"My little 'Christian soldier!'" she murmured under her breath as she slipped her hand into Skip's when he rose from his knees at her side.

As for the vicarage boys, the three who had sought to draw down ridicule upon the head of old age, they were covered with a sudden cloud of unutterable confusion and shame. All in a moment the fine joke they fancied would be the admiration of everybody shrivelled up into a cruel, paltry piece of fooling. Added to the shame was the certain knowledge that when the Vicar came to hear of such disgraceful proceedings on Sunday and in the very churchyard, a heavy punishment awaited them. Not daring to venture any further into the church, the three slipped into the free seat, where Joe Bradley, the bad boy of Dene, when he did come to any service, sat and hacked the book-board with his rusty pocket-knife. There crouched the trio, feeling abjectly that they were fit company for Joe, and quaking over the prospect of the morrow's lively interview with the furious Vicar. To add further to their misery and discomfort, they had a full view of Skip's round, fair head, reaching to his mother's elbow. They had thought it a fine thing indeed to raise a laugh at the expense of a helpless old lady, but they knew now, each of them, that it was a still finer thing to have braved ridicule instead of raising it. When the end of the service came the hymn given out was, strangely enough, 'Onward, Christian soldiers,' and the heads of the three sank lower. No soldiers did they feel; instead, they were merely contemptible deserters.

It was still worse when the congregation poured out into the sunlit air. Everybody

arate interview with the Vicar, in the study, they were dispatched to call upon Miss Ffrench, and beg her pardon. The poor lady—whether she was completely mystified or whether she knew the best way to 'heap coals of fire on her enemies' heads,' it would be difficult to say; but she insisted on her guests partaking of ample slices of the rich plum cake she hastily brought out of a carved, black oak cabinet, more ancient than herself. As they sat choking over the cake the three shame-stricken boys felt Miss Ffrench's hospitality to be the worst part of their punishment.

CHAPTER IV.

Years have come and gone since Skip joined the ranks of Christian soldiers. All through them the brave boy never swerved from the right in small things as well as in great, though he found the service of the Master no easy-going frivolling, but hard, and often unpalatable work. And, by-and-by, when Skip donned the British uniform, to set forth and serve his Queen and his country, he carried with him his own Articles of War, in the shape of the little Bible his mother had given him long ago. Cant was an unlearned language to Skip, and as a man, there was no more of the prig about him than there had been in the courageous urchin who would not allow cruelty to animals; who braved the Vicarage boys' jeers to spare his delicate sister a dangerous chill; who rescued a helpless old lady from a position of public ridicule.

Under the burning sun of India, the new recruit was plunged into a strange existence, full of privations and toil. It was altogether different from his boyish dreams of the glories of a military life. Skip's eyes were abruptly opened to the true meaning of cruel war; he was aghast at its inhumanity. And, instead of gay marchings to stirring music, with flags flying and hearts beating high