

THE FREE LANCE.

*"His good blade carves the casques of men, for the Free Lance
' thrusteth sure."*

VOL. XVI.

FEBRUARY, 1903.

No. 8.

AN OPERATOR'S TALE.

Two months of enforced rest and idleness had restored my lost strength and rendered me as fresh and ambitious as I ever was. I once more "panted for the fray." I was not compelled to pant long, but was soon summoned to prepare for work. The welcome news came in this shape:

OXFORD, PA., Oct. 1st.

BEN JOHNSON, WAWA:

Be at depot on arrival of train No. 1, ready to go to Octorara, to relieve the night operator. O. L. K.

I was on hand at the train, went to Octorara, arrived there at 9:10 P. M., and was immediately clothed with the toga of "all night man" and was happy. True, I was in the land of chills and fever. I might get the malaria again. What might occur did not trouble me. I was not of the sorrow-seeking kind. I stuck a pencil behind one ear, a pen behind the other, drew my chair to the instrument table and prepared for business.

I had never been in the neighboring town of Rowlandville before and imagine my surprise; then, as I was passing along the street to have a man rush out of a clothing store, grab my hand and shake it enthusiastically, exclaiming: "Ben, I am glad to see you. Looking better, too; when did you arrive? Going to stay long? Call in before you go. Guarantee to suit