

# THE FREE LANCE.

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

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## "THE EXILE."

The wind was blowing wildly through the great hemlocks, which twisted and groaned under the strain. The light from our camp-fire now and then penetrated the gloom of the forest and revealed huge tree trunks, which as soon retreated into the darkness or stood like wierd, gloomy sentinels around the camp. It was a night to make one appreciate a cheerful fire and a good companion. So we piled on the birch logs until flame and sparks shot high into the night above us, and the circle of fire-light widened still farther into the depth of the forest.

Joe had been recommended to our party as a first-class guide. He had proven himself all of this, for a better one I do not believe ever canoed over the waters of Madawaska. He was not in the same class with the ordinary Canadian guide, and, in truth, I had even suspected that he was not a Canadian. There was a gentleness in his speech and manner, which, despite his rough exterior, spoke rather of the drawing-room than of the rude life of the woods. Strangely, too, I had never heard his real name. From the first we had called him simply "Joe," and as this was conveniently short, we had not taken the trouble to inquire further into his history. But somehow I had begun to feel that there must be some deep mystery connected with his past, and I was not wholly unprepared for the strange story which he told that night.