### THE FREE LANCES. A ROMANCE OF THE MEXICAN VALLEY. IN THREE VOLUMES. VOL. III

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The free lances. A romance of the Mexican valley. In three volumes. Vol. III by Mayne Reid

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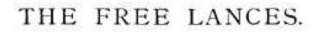
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### MAYNE REID

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Trieste



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# THE FREE LANCES.

#### A ROMANCE OF THE MEXICAN VALLEY.

BY

#### CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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#### CONTENTS.

	CHAPTER XLIII.						PAGE		
What are they? .	۲	3		4	•	9	•	1	
	Спа	FTER	XLI	v.					
The Abbot,	2	4	3 <b>.</b> 5	20	$\sim$	33	10	14	
		PTER							
The Free Lances, .	*	18	•	e 10	×	33	•	23	
	Спл	PTER	XLV	1.					
St. Augustine of the C	laves,	1.	28	÷	33	9 <b>8</b>	100	36	
	Снан	TER 2	XLV	11.					
Over the Cliff, .	13	8	25	323		35	828	46	
		TER X	LVI	II.					
On down the Mountain	n, .		Ŭ.	•		2	•	62	
		TER							
A Tale of Starvation,	(in)	\$		17	÷	( <b>•</b> )	3. •	75	
		APTEI							
An Encounter with Ol	d Ace	luaint	ances	s, .	•	×	3 <b>2</b>	87	
A Grumbling Guard,	CHAPTER LI.								
	8 <b>9</b>	$\mathbf{T}_{i}^{(1)}$			:0			99	100

# ARARELL TREATURE FUL

viii	Contents.							
	CH	PTE	LII					PAGE
A Danae's Shower, .	۲			•			•	109
	Сна	PTER	LIII	2				
A Series of Surprises,	10	\$	8	8553	22	÷	3	121
	Сна	PTER	LIV	÷.				
Monks no more, 🛛 .	6	30		533	÷	×		130
	Спл	PIEI	LV.					
"Only Empty Bottles,					<b>1</b> 0	28	2	14-
	Сна	PTER	LVI	ě.				
A Day of Suspense,	Solva Ni	2010200 (#	2	а 1395	•	12		15
	Сна	PTER	1.41	ſ,				
Under Arrest,	s	÷	87		22	3		16
	Снаг	TER	LVII	I.				
The Cochero Dogged,	ŔS.		- 29			54		17
	Снл	PTE	LI	ε.				
Ready to Start, .		8	3	s	×	53 <del>5</del>		18
	Сн	APTE	R LX					
"Surrender!" .	-		3			12	10	198
			LX					
Conclusion,	53		5		<u>6</u> 2	$\mathbb{R}^{2}$	4	204



#### THE FREE LANCES.

#### CHAPTER XLIII.

#### WHAT ARE THEY?



HE repast finished, the Holy Brethren, rising from the table together, for-

sook the Refectory. Some disappeared into cloisters on the sides of the great hallway, others strolled out in front, and seating themselves on benches that were 3-1

about, commenced rolling and smoking cigarittos.

The Abbot excusing himself to his stranger guests, on plea of pressing business, was invisible for a time. So they were permitted to betake themselves apart. Good manners secured them this. The others naturally supposed they might want a word in private, so no one offered to intrude upon them.

Just what they did want, and had been anxiously longing for. They had mutually to communicate; questions to be asked, and counsel taken together. Each was burning to know what the other thought of the company they had fallen into; the character of which was alike perplexing to both.

After getting hold of their hats they sauntered out by the great door, through which they had entered on the night before. The sun was now at meridian height, and his beams fell down upon the patch of open ground in front of the monastery; for a monastery they supposed it must be. A glance backward as they walked out from its walls showed its architecture purely of the conventual style; windows with pointed arches, the larger ones heavy mullioned, and a campanile upon the roof. This however, without bells, and partially broken down; as was much of the outer mason work everywhere. Here and there were walls crumbling to decay, others half hidden under masses of creeping plants and cryptogams, in short the whole structure seemed more or less dilapidated.

Soon they entered under the shadow of the trees; long-leaved evergreen pines loaded with parasites and epiphytes, among these several species of orchids—rare phenomenon in the vegetable world, that would have delighted the eye of a botanist. As they