

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

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**MAYNE REID**

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THE FREE LANCES.

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A ROMANCE OF THE MEXICAN VALLEY.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VOL. III.

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1881.

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## THE FREE LANCES.

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### CHAPTER XLIII.

#### WHAT ARE THEY?

HE repast finished, the Holy Brethren, rising from the table together, forsook 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

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