The Gringo Privateer

By PETER B. KYNE

SYNOPSIS.

Ken Burney receives the general managership of Bradley Bardin's ranch on condition that he puts Martin Bruce and Miguel Gallegos, cattle thieves, out of the way. Bruce has sworn to kill Burney, but on the few occasions they have met Burney has always outwitted the old desperado. Meanwhile Muriel Bardin becomes interested in Burney. She tries to persuade her father not to let Burney tackle the cattle thieves, but Burney goes ahead laying his plans.

Art Graydon, former general manager, is advising Burney up concerning the management of the ranch.

CHAPTER XX.

"One can never tell when he won't stumble over an interesting piece of information in these cow-county weeklies. They often give me a tip on where I can sell a nice mess of feeders and whenever I can sell direct I like to do it, and save the dollar a head commission to the cattle broker which we have to pay if we send the feeders on consignment to Kansas City or Chicago. Such little unexpected profits tend to take up the slack of the loss we suffer in El Cajon Bonita. If you conclude to remain here as general manager, Burney, take my advice and read all these little country papers."

"No, I'll not remain." Tom Bledsoe wants the job; he expects it and he has earned it. It would be just too bad to have a young Johnny-come-lately appear out of nowhere and beat the old Quaker out of his rights. As soon as I get cinched up El Cajon Bonita I'm riding into the cattle business for myself."

Graydon looked at the young man with the impending change of the world's color and middle-aged. "You will find that job off, young man, and you never be able to get into the cattle business for yourself," he warned. "The Quaker won't let you. He'll consider you too valuable an asset to his business to offer you an interest. Why, you can't even buy a bank account in El Cajon Bonita without his knowing about it. Tom Bledsoe is a good boy, but he's not in your class. Ken, I'd like to see you get a fair chance. Why, I'd like to see you get a decrepit old ranch like this one."

"Why, sir, I do that every day of my life. I only have to look in the mirror to see one. Burney, I'd advise you to be back in your office and retire to your shack. If you don't mind, Mr. Graydon, I wish you would continue to oversee the functions of general manager while you remain on El Ranchito. I'm a good general manager, sir, and I know anything about the cattle business I can learn from you. I want to get into a good business and I want to be my own boss. I want to be a cattleman. I want to be a rancher. I want to be a producer of beef. I want to be a citizen of El Cajon Bonita. I want to be a good neighbor. I want to be a good husband. I want to be a good father. I want to be a good citizen. I want to be a good man. I want to be a good Christian. I want to be a good Democrat. I want to be a good Republican. I want to be a good Mason. I want to be a good Elk. I want to be a good Odd Fellow. I want to be a good Knight of Pythias. I want to be a good Woodman of the World. I want to be a good Shriner. I want to be a good Elk. I want to be a good Moose. I want to be a good Eagle. I want to be a good Lion. I want to be a good Tiger. I want to be a good Bear. I want to be a good Beaver. I want to be a good Beagle. I want to be a good Bulldog. I want to be a good Dog. I want to be a good Cat. I want to be a good Mouse. I want to be a good Rat. I want to be a good Bat. I want to be a good Bird. I want to be a good Fish. I want to be a good Bee. I want to be a good Ant. I want to be a good Worm. I want to be a good Bug. I want to be a good Flea. I want to be a good Tick. I want to be a good Louse. I want to be a good Mosquito. I want to be a good Fly. I want to be a good Spider. I want to be a good Snake. I want to be a good Lizard. I want to be a good Frog. I want to be a good Toad. I want to be a good Turtle. I want to be a good Crab. I want to be a good Lobster. I want to be a good Shrimp. I want to be a good Oyster. I want to be a good Clam. I want to be a good Mussel. I want to be a good Snail. I want to be a good Slug