

# Prairie Avenue

By Arthur Meeker

Synopsis: Ned Ramsey, now a successful novelist, once more returns to Chicago. Aunt Lydia informs Ned that Sonny Kennerley has a mistress and plans to divorce Almir. Ned agrees to talk some sense into Sonny. He accepts Almir's and Sonny's invitation to spend the week-end with them. Celia, now a duchess, is one of the many guests at Sonny's palatial summer home. She pays considerable attention to Ned. She confides that she is very grateful to Mrs. Framingham for having married Mr. Kennerley since this releases Celia of any duty a daughter would be expected to perform for her widowed father. Now go on with the story—

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

NED CAME down to breakfast next day to find all the men assembled except Mr. Kennerley, whose age and infirmities obliged him, albeit unwillingly, to remain in seclusion till noon.

Ned's intention of waylaying Sonny as they left the table with a plea for a 10-minute chat in the den was frustrated by the latter's plan, immediately set afoot, of a general tour of the premises. This, one supposed, was inevitable; of what use were millionaires' possessions if they could not be shown off? It was a kind of periodic reassurance—for their own sakes, who otherwise might have doubted their value. And it had to be admitted, Sonny made the process as painless as possible. He literally rushed them through the gardens, the greenhouse, stables, kennels, even the model dairy, with its rows of fawn purebred Jerseys and glittering modern equipment, was disposed of in a quarter of an hour; he did not seem to know what he had paid for the animals or how the machinery worked, and made a huge joke.

The sole halt of any consequence was made in one of the paddocks, where a miniature grandstand had been erected. Here they were hidden to see themselves, while Sonny's head groom trotted over a series of hackneys and hunters for their inspection. By the time they got back to the house in theizzling midday heat Almir, in cream lace and an enormous plumed hat, was waiting to marshal her guests for lunch, at the club. Sonny, already a jumble of coaches and tandem-carts, stanhopes and Uburys, vis-a-vis and victorias, Hooves clicked and wheels rumbled, polished mountings of harness flashed in the sun. At the entrance Sonny flicked the boys, who broke into a gallop as they pulled their tumbling burden up the rise of ground to the clubhouse steps. Ned had supposed they were to lunch at the club, but Celia, it seemed, at the last minute had decided it would not do.

From this oval green island the battle and roar were pleasingly distant, though they had an excellent view of the big red-roofed clubhouse across the track with its flying pennants and the bright-colored blur of the gathering crowd on the porches. The servants made preparations for an alfresco meal. Ned, who knew little about horse racing and cared less, strolled beside Celia, feeling his pleasure doubled because she shared it; from time to time they glanced at each other tenderly, their eyes alight with the promise that their love would be eternal. Just as the ladies were making ready to climb aloft once more another carriage drove into the field; no coach, but a bright yellow phaeton drawn by a chunky black pony. The reins were held by a young man equally chunky; who was wearing a crimson-and-white striped blazer and a straw hat clapped on the back of his very square head. A cigarette drooped from one corner of the young man's mouth; his face was flushed and his hand buttoned black eyes like a doll's.

The pair were laughing loudly as they reined in the pony. Ned's amusement vanished when he saw Sonny; the latter had turned a dull red and was biting his lips in an effort to control himself. "I think you know we'd better be moving," was all he could manage to say, in an uncertain voice.

THE CHUNKY young man cracked his whip to attract their attention, and the young lady leaned over the side of the phaeton to exclaim with a brilliant smile: "Hello there, dearie—you didn't expect to see me here, did you? Well, to tell you the truth, I hardly expected it myself. I knew you couldn't take me out to the track today, but Dick happened along and coaxed me into coming with him. He just got back to town from Frisco and he—but I forget, you two don't know each other, do you? Meet my brother, Mr. Richard Branson—Mr. Abner Kennerley, Junior. I won't keep you now, Sonny boy just wanted to say hello and ta-ta—look me up in the grandstand later if you have a chance. Hurry up, Dickie; it's time we got going!"

In spite of her raucous laugh the young woman's speaking voice was unexpectedly low and agreeable.

Sonny started towards his wife with a wretched mumble of "Mira. I swear."

It was Celia who grasped her sister-in-law by the arm—Almir

was away, ready to faint—and exclaimed briskly: "It's high time we were hurrying, too! You know what Aunt Isabel will say if we're not in our places before the first race. Come along, dear!"

The women coalesced round their stricken hostess. Celia had pushed, half carried Almir up onto the gammon, and Sonny, in a daze, returned to his guests and his duty.

If never before, Ned had reason now to bless the brand of good manners peculiar to fashionable folk. It was not all acting either; as far as the Traffords and March and Nella La Touche were concerned, the scene with Miss Branson and her brother had simply not happened.

It was Almir who caused Ned concern. Ned watched her with loving anxiety; he soon saw that Celia was watching her, too; their common solicitude brought them closer than ever. Finally, in the long interval before the race of the day, the latter leaned back to whisper behind her programme: "You'd better take Mira home. It's cruel to keep her here any longer. How shall we manage?"

"Hasn't your father a carriage?"

"Of course!" said Celia. "The very thing! I'll just speak a word to Papa—we can say she's a headache—and I must confess the poor darling looks it."

ON THE way home the cousins saved to leave a message for Celia of explanation and regrets.

On the way to the club he stopped to order some roses. Across the card that accompanied them, he had written: "Terribly disappointed about tonight. Have to see S—you can guess about what. Longing, my darling, and all my love."

Ned hesitated, remembering his engagement with Celia. Then conscience and his attachment to the Stocks, won the victory. There seemed nothing for it

Very early next morning Sonny rang up and begged him to dine at the club. "Please come, Ned—I've got to see you alone!"

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Nearly a Year Since Anyone Saw Hitler

WASHINGTON, Sept. 1 (AP)—Government officials said today, with a sigh of relief, that it has been nearly a year since anyone has reported "seeing" Adolf Hitler.

U. S. Intelligence officials have long been convinced that the fanatical little Austrian, who started World War II 10 years ago today, is dead.

But the legend persists. In this country as well as in Germany, that Hitler is alive and in hiding. For years after the war, the FBI and Army and Navy intelligence were bombarded with "tips" that Hitler had been seen in this country.

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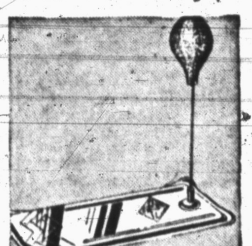
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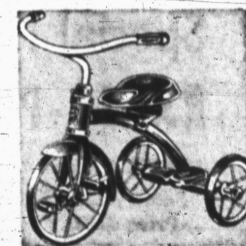


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