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vegetables was right there on the back porch, but I never touched 'em,' says she. 'I happened to have some cold ham and cold mutton on hand—not much of either one—and I sliced 'em and put the ham in one end o' the big meat-dish and the mutton in the other, with a big bare place between, so's everybody could see that there wasn't enough of either one to go 'round; and then,' says she, 'I sliced up a loaf o' my salt-risin' bread and got out a bowl o' honey and a dish o' damson preserves, and then I went out on the porch and told Sam that dinner was ready.'

'I never shall forget how we all laughed when Milly was tellin' it. 'You know, Aunt Jane,' says she, 'how quick a man gets up when you tell him dinner's ready. Well, Sam he jumps up, and says he, "Why, you're mighty smart to-day, Milly; I don't believe there's another woman in the country that could git a Sunday dinner this quick." And says he, "Walk out, Brother Hendricks, walk right out."'

Here Aunt Jane paused to laugh again at the long-past scene that her words called up.

'Milly used to say that Sam's face changed quicker'n a flash o' lightnin' when he saw the table, and he dropped down in his cheer and forgot to ask Brother Hendricks to say grace. 'Why, Milly,' says he, 'where's the dinner? Where's them chickens I killed last night, and the potatoes and corn and butter-beans?' And Milly jest looked him square in the face, and says she, 'The chickens are in the spring-house and the vegetables out on the back porch, and,' says she, 'do you suppose I'm goin' to cook a hot dinner for you all on this "sweet day o' rest"?''

Aunt Jane Stopped again to laugh.

'That wasn't a polite way for anybody to talk at their own table,' she resumed, 'and some of us asked Milly what Brother Hendricks said. And Milly's face got as red as a beet again, and she says: "Why, he behaved so nice, he made me feel right ashamed o' myself for actin' so mean. He jest reached over and helped himself to everything he could reach, and says he, "This dinner may not suit you, Brother Amos, but it's plenty good for me, and jest the kind I'm used to at home." Says he, "I'd rather eat a cold dinner any time than have a woman toilin' over a hot stove for me." And when he said that, Milly up and told him why it was she didn't feel like gettin' a hot dinner, and why she didn't sing in the voluntary; and when she'd got through he says, "Well, Sister Amos, if I'd been through all you have this mornin' and then had to git and give out such a hymn as "Welcome, sweet day o' rest," I believe I'd be mad enough to pitch the hymn-book and the Bible at the deacons and the elders.' And then he turns around to Sam, and says he, "Did you ever think, Brother Amos, that there ain't a pleasure men enjoy that women don't have to suffer for it?" And Milly said that made her feel meaner'n ever; and when supper-time come, she lit the fire and got the best hot supper she could—fried chicken and waffles and hot soda-biscuits and coffee and goodness knows what else. Now wasn't that jest like a woman, to give in after she'd had her own way for a while and could 'a' kept on havin' it? Abram used to say that women and runaway horses was jest alike; the best way to manage 'em both was to give 'em the rein and let 'em go till they got tired, and they'll always stop before they do any mischief. Milly said that supper tickled Sam pretty near to death. Sam was always mighty proud o' Milly's cookin'.'

'So that's how we come to call that hymn Milly Amos' hymn, and as long as Milly lived folks'd look at her and laugh whenever the preacher give out "Welcome, sweet day o' rest."'

The story was over. Aunt Jane folded her hands, and we both surrendered ourselves to happy silence. All the faint, sweet sounds that break the stillness of a Sunday in the country came to our ears in gentle symphony—the lisp of the leaves, the chirp of young chickens lost in the mazes of billowy grass, and the rustle of the silver poplar that turned into a mass of molten silver whenever the breeze touched it.

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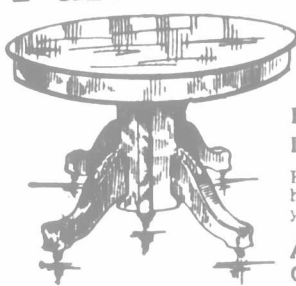
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