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Why, then, since all was so plain, did Coombe scent a mystery? It would be hard to say. Perhaps the curious behaviour of Dr. Callandar was partly responsible. When the news of his sudden breakdown became known the first natural comment was, "So, you see, he did love her after all." But, upon longer consideration this did not seem to meet the case. A man may be genuinely in love with a woman and yet not be stricken, as had the doctor, by her sudden death. Dimly, Coombe felt that there must be a cause behind the cause. Miss Sinclair, the eldest, even went so far as to quote Shakespeare to the effect that "men have died and the worms have eaten them, but not for love." True, the doctor was not dead but his illness was proving a very long and stubborn one. In its early stages he had been taken away to Toronto for special treatment and had been quite unable to see any one, even the minister, before he left. Mrs. Sykes alone, with the exception of the trained nurses, had laid eyes on him since his sudden collapse on the day of the wedding. And Mrs. Sykes, miraculously, had nothing to say.

It was rumoured, however, that his brain was affected, that he was paralysed, that he was deaf and blind, that he was dying of slow decline. Somehow the town felt that Mary Coombe, living or dead, did not loom large enough as a cause of such disintegration.

Esther's actions, too, were part of the puzzle. It had been confidently supposed that she would go away at once for a rest and change. Every one knew that the Hollises had offered to take her with them on a long trip to the Pacific Coast. But Esther had declined to go. She declined to go anywhere. Worn out as she