

## LOVE'S AWAKENING

By Charles L. Doyle.

Maude Alvin had promised Edwin Ralston that she would become his wife, her promise had been given two months before, and there seemed to be no reason why she should regret it. There was certainly no fault to be found with her prospective husband as far as money, family and position went, and Maude was not ambitious. Yet her aunt, Mrs. Chambers, who was living over her own youth in this love affair of her favorite niece, had said rather anxiously to the girl's mother only yesterday: "Do you think Maude is really happy?"

"Why shouldn't she be?" responded Mrs. Alvin. "Surely Edward is as good a match for her as she is for him."

"Yes, I know, but—do you think, Fanny, that she loves him as a woman should love the man she is about to marry?"

"You must remember," replied her sister, gravely, "that Maude was never like other girls in anything, and we cannot expect her to be any different in this case. She is not to be judged by ordinary standards, and is certainly not too impressionable."

Mrs. Alvin ended her sentence with an uneasy laugh, she seemed divided between amusement and impatience when discussing this child of hers, whom she but little understood.

Just why Maude had promised to wed Ralston she scarcely knew. Perhaps it was merely be-

cause he was such an old friend, and his mood had fallen in so well with hers that night in July as they stood on the beach at Atlantic City, watching the long silvered roll of the sea. She was thinking of it as she sat alone this late October evening. An east wind, penetrating and chill, swept in from the ocean and a bright fire burned in the open grate.

Maude moved over to the piano, her slender hands touched the keyboard, and from under them swelled the opening bars of Rubenstein's "Melody," a sure indication in her of a softened mood. She played on and on, sometimes dreamily, sometimes mournfully, sometimes with splendid power and depth, changing at last into a movement of sad loneliness wherein it seemed she were playing to her own thoughts.

In a little while the music came to a sudden stop and Maude rose and began to walk nervously back and forth across the room. She was telling herself that she could not marry him, after all, and yet had no particular reason for refusing to carry out her promise, at least no reason that she could formulate into a thought and express in words. It was useless to try to shape out a plausible explanation, she would simply tell him that her feelings were all against it, she meant to appeal to his generosity and beg him to be still her faithful friend. She threw herself wearily into a chair, and when the bell sounded in the hall below, it did not occur to her even to wonder who it might be