

**ANGEL UNAWARES:
A STORY OF
CHRISTMAS EVE**

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Angel Unawares: A Story of Christmas Eve by C. N. Williamson & A. M. Williamson

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C. N. WILLIAMSON & A. M. WILLIAMSON

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ANGEL UNAWARES

A Story of Christmas Eve

BY

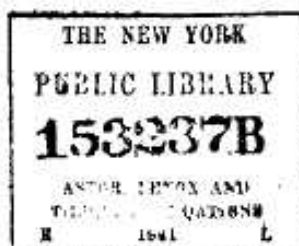
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IF Angel Odell hadn't had a French nursery governess, and if that French governess hadn't suddenly recognized her lost lover in a wounded French sergeant on the sea-front, the Valois story would have been a Christmas tragedy instead of—what it turned out to be. This was strange, because neither the little American girl nor her governess nor her governess's lover had ever heard of the Valois family, nor had the Valois family heard of them. But most things that happen are strange, if seen from every point of view.

At first, when Mademoiselle Rose gave a little scream and rushed away from her charge to a good-looking soldier with his arm in a sling, Angel stood still, extremely interested. Her mother did not know about the

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lost lover. One need not tell all one's heart secrets to one's employer on being engaged at a Paris agency! But Mademoiselle cried in the night sometimes and gazed at a photograph, so Angel (whose bed was in the same room) had asked questions safer to answer than leave unanswered. When she saw the meeting she quickly put two and two together in her intelligent, seven-year-old brain. "That's Claude," said the child to herself. "So he's alive, after all. My goodness *me!* what a nice Christmas present for Mademoiselle! I'm glad it's after lunch instead of before, though, for I *was* hungry, and I expect she'll want to talk to him a long time. I suppose she'll introduce him to me and we'll all three walk up and down."

Instead of walking, however, Mademoiselle and her Christmas present sat down on one of the seats placed at regular intervals along the Mentone sea front. Apparently Mademoiselle forgot Angel's existence, and "Claude" had not observed it. The child stood neglected until she was tired and very bored. Then, too polite to interrupt (a suc-

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cession of nursery governesses of several nations had instructed her never to interrupt), she decided to go home.

"Home" was a hotel; and Mrs. Odell, Angel, and Mademoiselle had arrived only the day before from Paris. Mademoiselle had been in Mentone before (that was one reason for engaging her), but Angel and her mother never had. Angel's father was one of several brilliant young men in the American Embassy, where he was well content for himself, but found the idea of bombs on heads he loved bad for his nerves; accordingly, wife and child had been sent to safety in the south of France, somewhat against the former's will. At the moment, Elinor Odell was getting off letters, meaning to go out later and buy Christmas toys. So it happened that, just as Angel was wondering which turn to take, Angel's mother was writing: "Mademoiselle is young and pretty, but as trustworthy as if she were a *hundred*. She never loses sight of the Angel-Imp for an instant."

The Angel-Imp in question wished that

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streets going inland from the Promenade du Midi didn't look so much alike. They all seemed to have rivers or gardens running up the middle, and pointed blue mountains at the back, except the ones farther along, where the shops were. Angel remembered a bridge. She thought the right turn was near. Yes, that must be the street! You walked along that for a while, and then you had to turn again. You passed villas with gardens.

By and by Angel forgot to look for landmarks; there were so many things which amused her: children riding on donkeys led by brown old women in funny hats like toadstools; a flock of very white sheep with long, silky hair, being driven by a fur-coated boy into an olive wood; bands of soldiers black as jet, wearing queer red caps on their woolly heads. It was all so interesting and exciting that when Angel remembered herself she was not quite sure she knew where she was.

This would have been rather frightening if the realization hadn't come just outside the half-open gates of a garden lovely as fairyland. It had been winter in Paris. Here it