

THE UNCALLED



CHAPTER I

IT was about six o'clock of a winter's morning. In the eastern sky faint streaks of grey had come and were succeeded by flashes of red, crimson-cloaked heralds of the coming day. It had snowed the day before, but a warm wind had sprung up during the night, and the snow had partially melted, leaving the earth showing through in ugly patches of yellow clay and sooty mud. Half despoiled of their white mantle, though with enough of it left to stand out in bold contrast to the bare places, the houses loomed up, black, dripping, and hideous. Every once in a while the wind caught the water as it trickled from the eaves, and sent it flying abroad in a chill unsparkling spray. The morning came in, cold, damp, and dismal.

At the end of a short, dirty street in the