

CHAPTER III.

OUT IN A STRANGE WORLD.

Mary arrived at Morrison street in a depressing steady downpour of rain. The cab was laden with her boxes, as she had brought away many little pictures and favorite possessions which would serve to remind her of Wolfcote.

Her appearance was very noticeable: she was tall, well built, had regular features, a healthy clear skin, and well-dressed, dark brown hair. Although her tailor-made clothes had been cut by a country workman, they fitted well, and her felt hat suited her perfectly.

The Curtices had two shops, and at the side of one of them, next door to an eel supper house, a noted one in the neighborhood, was the narrow door, with its knocker and bell, of the private dwelling where Miss Curtice and her two nieces dwelt. The brother was married, and he lived away from his business.

When the cabman opened the door, he looked at the house and then at Mary inquiringly, as much as to say, "You made a mistake, perhaps, in the address."

"It is all right," she said, cheerily, although in the rain and the twilight it all looked very dreary to the country-bred girl, who had always been surrounded by pleasant sights and sounds.

A boy was yelling "Piper!" up the street, his arm full of newspapers; another was crying, "Defeat of the Boers! Horrible slaughter!" and again, "Ghastly murder in James street!"

Miss Curtice was still busy over her books in the shop below, but she came out to lead Mary to her bedroom, and said she would soon have finished for the day and be upstairs.

"My niece Annie attends to the house. By the time you have taken off your hat and put on some slippers, tea will be ready for you. There is a nice fire in the little sitting-room. I do hope you will not find it very cramped there. I have a bright log of wood burning; it is more cheerful than coal, and brother John is very liberal to us with his odds and ends from the workshops below."

But for an overwhelming sense of loneliness and isolation, which forced itself upon Mary, with the thought that now, for the first time in her life, she must sit down to solitary meals—sit solitary and silent, with no encouraging smile or affectionate glance opposite to her—but for these thoughts, she had little to complain of, she told herself.

The table was daintily spread, with a glass of chrysanthemums in the centre. The bread was good, the butter