

## CHAPTER III

### WE MAKE A START

“TUESDAY, February 26th. At last the day has arrived, the great day, when the journey is to commence. The week has passed in untiring work to get everything ready. We should have started on the 20th, but it has been postponed from day to day; there was always something still to do. My head has been full night and day, with all that was to be done and that must not be forgotten. Oh, this unceasing mental strain, which does not allow a minute's respite in which to throw off the responsibility, to give loose rein to the thoughts, and let the dreams have full sway! The nerves are in a state of tension from the moment of awaking in the morning till the eyes close late at night. Ah! how well I know this state, which I have experienced each time I have been about to set out and retreat was to be cut off—never, I believe, more effectually than now! The last few nights I did not get to bed before half-past three or half-past four o'clock in the morning. It is not only what we ought to take with us that has to be taken care of, but we have to leave the vessel; its command and responsi-