

IV

MR BURGOYNE was engaged upon his *Framework of Life*.

Day after day—week days, Sundays—week after week, through the changing seasons, through the gliding year, the quiet work went on in the quiet room. Each morning the assistants took their accustomed places—Mrs Burgoyne at her desk near the French windows, Mr Stone at his desk near the window recess that contained the toy cupboards; and each morning they both glanced with doubt and apprehension at the pile of letters, pamphlets, circulars, etc., on the table near the door. Would the morning's post be easy or difficult?

So often it happened that he, the master-worker, was called off the work by a request that he could not refuse, and Mr Stone was forced to watch long hours, instead of moments, leaking away. Sometimes they were lucky, and morning after morning the assistants smiled at each other as the last letter was opened and the post-bag shown to have contained nothing dangerous—that is to say, nothing that they, the assistants, could not themselves deal with. Then the luck would turn and the calls seemed incessant. Now it is Vivisection: a letter to *The Times* that must be written. One of the great lights has said that he should speak. A final word is needed from him on this, that, or the other burning question. Now it is a demand for letters that have come to him years ago. He must hunt all the morning for those friendly notes from the worker whose work has been stopped by death. Sorrowing friends are busy with the Biography and they want all materials as rapidly as may be possible. So he sits reading old letters in front of the big press wherein lie private correspondence as well as the famous portfolios.