

"I don't understand it all" said he, "I have given the fellow every chance."

"And so have I," was my answer.

"I know you have; I feel convinced you have done everything for him in school that could be done. If I hadn't been convinced you were doing the best you could for him, I would have removed him from your school long ago. But what is the matter?"

Of course under the circumstances it was not for me to say what was the matter. The lad was intellectually deficient. Sometimes I had been all but inclined to think that he would never earn a living for himself, but it would have been a sacrilege for me to say so to his father, who had only been able to make a living for himself and family by receiving a government appointment after he had run through the fortune his father had left him.

"I don't understand it," he repeated. "my daughters are the same. They cannot learn. They are good girls. Manage household matters pretty well. Of great help to their mother; but beyond that they have no reputation for ability of any kind. They never did anything at school. They were always being outstripped by their schoolmates, and how it comes about is more than I can say."

And of course it was more than I *dared* say at the moment.

"Now as for me," he continued, "I have always been able to make my way in the world. I have had my drawbacks of course, as every man has had. I was left well off by my father it is true. But the hundred thousand dollars which he left me were not lost from any fault of my own, from any mismanagement on my part. I had always my wits about me. The times went wrong. Property declined in value from the change of trade. And I was obliged to turn to a political situation. But nobody ever has had to say that I am a fool. In fact I don't believe I am a fool," and he struck his Micawber-like bald head as he said it by way of emphasis. "No, I don't believe I am a fool, and why my children should be fools is more than I can make out. The fact is, schoolmaster, I believe the children take after their mother more than after me."

My mother had some conversation with the master after the door had been closed between them and me. What that conversation was, was no business of mine to find out, nor was I anxious at the moment to make anything of the world I had left behind me in presence of the world into which I had been ushered.