

"Christopher Hyslop Hoogan," said Toddles, unbending.

Donkin put his hand quickly to his mouth—and coughed.

"Um-m!" said he pleasantly. "Super hard on you this morning—Hoogan?"

And with the words Toddles' heart went out to the big despatcher: "Hoogan"—and a man-to-man tone.

"No," said Toddles cordially. "Say, I thought you were on the night trick."

"Double-shift—short-handed," replied Donkin. "Come from New York, don't you?"

"Yes," said Toddles.

"Mother and father down there still?"

It came quick and unexpected, and Toddles stared for a moment. Then he walked over to the window.

"I haven't got any," he said.

There wasn't any sound for an instant, save the clicking of the instruments; then Donkin spoke again—a little gruffly:

"When are you going to quit making an ass of yourself?"

Toddles swung from the window, hurt. Donkin, after all, was like all the rest of them.

"Well?" prompted the despatcher.

"You go to blazes!" said Toddles bitterly, and started for the door.

Donkin halted him.

"You're only fooling yourself, Hoogan," he said coolly. "If you wanted what you call a real railroad job as much as you pretend you do, you'd get one."

"Eh?" demanded Toddles defiantly; and went back to the table.

"A fellow," said Donkin, putting a little sting into his