

CLINKER.

A PROSE IDYL.]

BY ST. QUENTIN, TORONTO.

CHAPTER I.

CLINKER lived on King Street. Gaining her living by most shameless acts, of which, nevertheless, Clinker was not ashamed ; on the contrary, she gloried in them.

Some people, I notice, always glory in shameless things, doubtless feeling that, being destined for such, they are fulfilling destiny ; and it is right for a man to glory in filling greatly his appointed sphere.

Therefore the shameless glory. And I, having frequently observed this to be the case, have derived just edification from it. This is why the thistle rears its haughty head while the violet is lowly. It is also the reason why the full-stemmed weeds flourish so bravely while the scented flowers need much care and watering.

Some people, I remarked, always glory in shameless things ; Clinker was one of these people.

I doubt whether it was a glory derived from a conscious reasoning on her part, that 'being born a weed, I will be a notable one.' This is, no doubt, the course of reasoning which the weeds pursue, while the timorous flowerets are content with being fair, not caring to be notable. Clinker, I cannot help thinking, reached her result by intuition, and not by reasoning. This I think because of her age.

Clinker's age was eleven. Only eleven, and yet her arts were manifold and very wicked.

Such of these arts as came under my notice I will retail, though the artist-instinct and the inimitable execution which belonged to Clinker cannot be retailed.

I retail them as a tablet to her memory. Clinker was eleven, and she sold papers.

Two things by no means reprehensible in themselves, you will notice, and yet —, well, with her genius, it was a broad enough foundation to rear a very reprehensible structure on.

The manner in which I became acquainted with Clinker was after the following :

I was walking, as I sometimes do when the afternoon is waning, and handsome dresses and faces are thickening, on the south side of King Street. I must confess that on this occasion I was not alone. Unfortunately, and, as it subsequently proved, to my ultimate loss of much peace of mind, I had a companion of the fair persuasion. And I was using every art which is known to men below to advance myself in her good graces. I was weak enough to be most ignobly desirous of appearing well in her eyes.

Sic semper tyronibus! Boys will do these things, you know.

This thing was not unnoticed as I passed—unconsciously passed—by the observant Clinker. May Clinker paid even especial attention to it, saw her opportunity, and marked me for her victim ; basely, cruelly, marked me for her victim. Took advantage of this momentary and most regretted