

# THE LION'S MOUTH

## THE HEIR

BY C. A. BENNETT

ONCE upon a time there was a man who said: "Go to, now; I will build the largest and most beautiful and most comfortable hotel in the city. It shall have a thousand rooms and a thousand bathrooms. The rooms will be cool in summer and warm in winter, and the waiters will be known far and wide for their courtesy."

So he consulted an architect. And the architect gathered his staff together, and for months they worked, solving difficult problems of design, struggling to harmonize the claims of comfort and beauty, and transferring with exquisite precision their ideals to paper.

Engineers came with their gangs of laborers—men from all parts of the earth, from Italy and Russia, from Ireland and Scandinavia and Africa. They dug and blasted through the sweating summer and raised and riveted great girders of steel through the cold of winter. Workers in marble and dressers of fine stone and masons joined in the task. Brains served muscle and muscles served brain until at last the tall shell of the building was complete.

Came the craftsmen in wood and worked skilfully in oak and walnut and mahogany and cedar; and with the men who knew the ways of stone, to carve the capitals of pillars and to lay floors of marble and tiled floors and floors of tessellated stones in beautiful archaic patterns.

The interior of the vast building was alive with workers—with glaziers and plumbers and mechanics and electricians and painters, who through their various skills brought the wisdom of generations

to the creating of this—the finest hotel in the city.

Came the decorators and upholsterers, with multitudinous furniture, with fine stuffs and hangings upon which thousands of human hands had been working for months, with rare tapestries and with rugs looted from Eastern palaces.

The four quarters of the globe were ransacked and the energies of uncounted thousands of men were laid under command, for was not this to be the finest hotel, the last word of civilization, in the city?

At last it was finished, and the man at whose desire it had taken shape surveyed it and saw that it was good, and set a day for the grand opening.

Upon the great day I went to the hotel and, passing through the crowd of people in the great hall, made my way down a broad corridor toward the dining-room. Two men, who had just left the dining-room, were coming toward me. The one nearer me was a short, stout man, gross and puffy in appearance. He was wearing shiny black shoes, white socks, a rather loud check suit, and a white tie. A soft hat was pushed back on his head. He was picking his teeth as he walked. He seemed quite at home in the midst of the material splendor which surrounded him, as though he had come into his own.

He sank into a deep arm-chair near by, and indicated another, with a little gesture, to his companion. He sat up in the chair, hitched up his trousers, and pushed his hat a little farther back. He produced two cigars and offered one to his companion, who refused it.

"Whazza matter? Not feelin' good? . . . Well, after that dinner I feel prime."

He bit on his cigar and spat the end

out on the floor. He lighted it and puffed sensuously for a few moments. Then he turned to his companion, and said:

"Well, as I was tellin' you, I said to the guy, 'Y' oughter be dam' glad you could get five dollars a pair for them,' I said."

He paused, and spat in the direction of a large brass urn.

He missed.

Yet the stones of the tessellated pavement did not cry out.

### DE SENECTUTE

BY DONALD CORLEY

THEY were huddled over the little fire in the pseudo-empire drawing-room. It was snowing in Venice, and the two little old men who were warming their hands were a trifle melancholy. The adventures of the morning had been spoiled for them.

"It's too bad, Abner," one of them was saying. "We might have gotten over there and found the little alley that we couldn't even measure with the yard-stick. That one yesterday was thirty-seven inches, wasn't it? The little one between the church and the bake-shop?"

"Thirty-seven and a quarter," his brother corrected, dolorously, but triumphantly.

Then they began to tell me who they were; that they had a hardware-store upstate in New York, and that they had gotten tired of sitting around in front of it while their nephews did the work, and they guessed they were too old to be much use, anyway. The only fun they ever had, it seemed, was going up the river with the flat-boat and bringing down a lot of stones that they picked up in the fields to build a wall around the pasture.

"We didn't need the wall," one of them explained, "but it gave us something to do. And so I said to brother one day: 'John, let's go to Europe. It might liven us up a bit.' And so here we are."

"Yes," echoed John, "here we are in Europe, and we've been in Florence, and we've been in Rome, and if it hadn't been snowing this morning we'd have gone out measuring. You know Abner and me gets lots of fun measuring these little streets in Venice. First we began to notice how narrow they were, and we got real interested one day when we found one we couldn't walk in, 'cept Indian file, and Brother Abner remembered he'd put a yard-stick in his trunk (Got it out of the store, you know, thinking we might need it—though Nephew Adoniram laughed at us for wanting to take a yard-stick to Europe) and I remembered I had a steel tape-line. It's a good one, too; we got three-fifty for them in the store, and they don't stretch none, either—steel ones. Since then we've found Venice real interesting. And every morning after breakfast we've been going measuring. Then we stop to feed the pigeons at Saint Mark's Church and come home to dinner. Do you know they's six streets that's forty-two inches wide, and two thirty-nine, and seventeen that's between forty-two and sixty (though the wider ones don't interest us much), and *one* that's thirty-seven?"

"Thirty-seven and a quarter," his brother corrected again.

"And we hope to find one that's thirty inches wide, but Abner thinks he saw one somewhere that might be twenty-nine, and when we find it I guess we'll be moving on. But it's snowing to-day, and I don't know. Abner's rheumatism is beginning to hurt him some, and I don't know. We measured one of those gondolas, too, and then we got interested to see if they was all the same length, all lying there together in the water—but the gondola-men didn't seem to like us to."

"Do you like going about in a gondola?" I inquired.

"Well, we talked about doing it, at first," he answered, "but we guessed that hauling stones on the flat-boat was about right for us."