HERE,” said the Charity Visitor impressively, indicating the kindergarten room with a sweep of one much be-jeweled hand, while with the other she held her lorgnette to her eyes and viewed the goldfish sentimentally, “here, young ladies, lies the salvation, yes, I would say even the regeneration, of the child of the slums.

“He comes to us starved, metaphorically. He comes to us from the uncongenial environment of the slums and the tenement house. He comes to us with a longing, though unexpressed, for the good, the pure, the beautiful. We meet this longing, young ladies. We lead him into a miniature world of light, of music, of song. In every child lies a divine spark awaiting the magnetic influence that will make it kindle and burst into flame. We of the Organized Charity Board furnish the magnet. We satisfy the soul of the child.”

The class in Experimental Philanthropy scribbled nervously in their note books as they filed into the kindergarten room, and took seats at a safe distance from the circle of small chairs which indicated the magnet’s point.

“You will note carefully during the morning,” went on the Charity Visitor, “the manner in which each stage of the work is planned to meet the esthetic needs of the child. We begin the exercises with a period of quieting music. Ah, the ‘March of the Prophets!’ How appropriate!”

To the prophetic strains issuing forth from a wheezy piano, and with measured tread and slow, the children of the slums marched in as one body. As one body save for Patsy, paired with Carmella, and surreptitiously sticking a pin into her fat little leg as he poured his woes into a friendly ear:

“I won’t march wid her! Ginnies and Polocks ain’t your neighbors, not if they live by your own cellar!”

As one body save also for Rocco, who brought up the rear, weeping copiously.

“He dressed by his self already,” explained Assunta. “He’s pants is on wrong side front, like. He say he know not which way to march.”

But the path of the march lay mercifully short. Each child reached a chair, seated himself, and folded his hands reverently as the last chord of music died away in ethereal faintness.
THE REGENERATION OF BENVENUTO

"The circle is the symbol of unity, young ladies," said the Charity Visitor. "In founding this great educational system, Pestalozzi, Froebel, even Kant—" but the flow of her discourse was interrupted.

"Now what are we all thinking about, children," asked the kindergartner. "What did we talk about yesterday? Who remembers the story of the dear little bird?"

Patsy waved one little black hand wildly in the air.

"Well, Patsy, love, you did remember. Tell the story to us," said the kindergartner.

"Sure, ma'am," said Patsy, his vehemence causing him to rise and stand upon his feet, "you niver see'd the likes of Benvenuto. Yisterday he undid the chain forninst the Ginny's milk cans, and the milk it come a-pourin' out like a sewer-pipe. Oh, the cats, Miss Bessie, they was thick! And he near got sent up, Benvenuto did, only the cop said he was too little."

"Yes," piped in Carmella, not waiting for the formality of raising a hand, "and Benvenuto's coming by the kindergarten this day, Miss Bessie. He looks just like a robin. I see him already when I started."

"He don't look like no robin," retorted Patsy, scornfully. "He's breast aint in the right place."

"There, there, children," said Miss Bessie, glancing nervously at the class in Experimental Philanthropy, which was still taking hurried notes. "We will sing 'Where do all the Birdies Go'?"

The dulcet strains poured forth from the piano, but there was suddenly a sound as of shuffling, and the rattle of overturned furniture, which issued from the hall. Nearer and nearer came the sounds as a white clad individual entered the room, breathless, but with an outward semblance of calm.

"I have a new little man for you, Miss Bessie. He is a trifle old for the kindergarten, but he does n't seem to care for the story hour, and he quite refused to join the basketry class. He threw a chisel at the carpentry teacher, so it seemed as if he needed the calming influence of the kindergarten. I believe he is fresh from the children's court, where he was discharged because of his youth. But you will know just what to do with him, I feel sure."

And in the doorway appeared a buxom Irish maid, the drops of
perspiration streaming from her brow as she forcibly backed in a small boy. His entrance could be obtained in none other than this goat-like manner, because of extreme unwillingness on his part. The dirt of seven seasons had left its imprint upon his little round face. His likeness to a robin was gloweringly set forth in a brilliant orange patch with which his mother had reinforced the seat of his trousers.

A hushed whisper of “Benvenuto, Benvenuto, yesterday, Benvenuto!” went about the circle.

“He’s breast aint in the right place! See, Greeny!” said Patsy; but the voice of Benvenuto arose as he glanced over his shoulder at the sea of strange faces:

“Me no lika, me no lika. Me go by the cop, rather. He have a feared on this place. Me go by the cop station, rather!”

The maid wiped her perspiring brow.

“ Asking your pardon, Miss, he comes to ye unwashed, or not at all. Git in there, ye spalpeen! Sure and I tried to wash him, but what with his being sewed up that tight that I could n’t get to him proper without ripping him—which he would n’t allow—it was n’t to be done. When me back was turned, what does he do but fill his pockets with tooth brushes, and then he eats a bit of pink castile, thinking it to be candy. Sure and I hope his insides is clean!”

Through the combined efforts of members of the class in Experimental Philanthropy, Benvenuto was conducted to a chair. When urged to be seated he stiffened into the likeness of a ramrod, but whether it was the sight of a few familiar faces, or Patsy’s trying the orange patch with one grimy little thumb to see if it would burn, suddenly Benvenuto shut up like a jack-knife, and found his place within the “symbol of unity.”

“Where do all the little birdies go?” asked Miss Bessie, her tremulous tones attesting her mental state. “Did you ever see a little bird, Benvenuto?”

No answer, but Benvenuto surveyed her through half shut, big, brown eyes, that held a light as of dark design within their depths.

“They go by the garbage-can, already,” ventured Assunta. “They likes our remains.” The Charity Visitor ignored Assunta, saying:

“Subconsciously, this child will be deeply influenced by the exercises of the morning. Whether or not he reaches the point of expression to-day will be interesting to note. A most unexpected oppor-
tunity, young ladies, to note the calming effect of kindergarten symbolism upon the undeveloped mind.”

**Benvenuto** appeared to the outward eye calm but speechless. He observed the trained movements of the children of the slums as they moved their chairs and cleared the “symbol of unity” for a period of games. After much pressure, he, also, deposited his chair within close proximity to the Charity Visitor, and shuffled around with the others in a mad ring of dancing as they caroled:

> “Sing sweet, a happy band,  
> Each beside the other stand.”

Benvenuto looked expectantly about for the band, and Patsy, close by, sang vociferously his own interpretation of the song:

> “Singing sweet a happy band  
> Taking cider off a stand.”

But neither of these happy objects met Benvenuto’s anxious gaze. Surely a kindergarten was a place of delusions; and the song changed:

> “Fly, little birds, fly round the ring—”

Assunta and Rocco spread their arms wide and began flapping them ecstatically up and down as they circled about to the tune of the Spring Song.

> “Fly, Benvenuto, fly!” came in stentorian tones from somewhere, so Benvenuto flapped also. But alas for the shoes of his mother which he was wearing! In the palmy days of their youth even, they were not meant to adorn the feet of a robin; nor yet to cavort to the theme of Mendelssohn. Benvenuto tripped and fell, and Patsy’s whispered remarks of sarcasm broke upon his ear.

Benvenuto picked himself up, and dashed upon Patsy.

> “Feet-a too big-a! Greeny! Me show-a you!” And words too eloquent for pen to chronicle. In the desperate struggle that ensued symbolic games were forgotten as Benvenuto was placed forcibly in his chair, sullen but triumphant, and Patsy was led weeping from the room to be repaired as to his nose, and consoled as to his spirit.

> “What the child needs is the Gift work,” said the Charity Visitor with finality, in the hushed pause that ensued after Patsy’s removal.
THE REGENERATION OF BENVENUTO

"Give his little hands something to do, and his little heart will expand."
"We will each have a little red apple, children," said Miss Bessie as the class in Experimental Philanthropy grouped itself about the long, low table, to note the psychological and ethical effect of red-worsted balls upon the infant mind:
"And the wind will rock the apples and sing to them. Now they go high, now low, now high. Every child hold his ball up very high. Why, where is your ball, Benvenuto?"
Benvenuto's English failed him.
"He got it already by his shirt," said Assunta. "Benvenuto swipes, always, Miss Bessie!"
"Ah, you mustn't do that, little boy," said Miss Bessie in agony of spirit, but Benvenuto's hour of retribution had arrived. A free passage across the room presented itself and an open window. Who could resist? What mattered it that the Charity Visitor's lorgnette was broken, the goldfish jar overturned, and the theories of the class in Experimental Philanthropy shattered in his wild rush for freedom? A sound as of breaking glass and a last view of the robin's misplaced breast disappearing from sight through the window.

TO BE let loose in the sunshine of New York, and on Grand Street!

Music? Its refining influence? From a corner came the glorious strains of "Blue Bells" and "Heiny" ground out of a hurdy-gurdy, with a banjo and a tambourine attachment. Benvenuto executed a war dance, alone and unobserved, save for the sacred cat of the McGintys, who was guiltily sleeping on an ash-pile, and whose lank tail he stepped upon.

Where? Chinatown Joe was playing in the Bowery, and in mad patches of red and green and yellow were the charms of the play set forth on a poster that covered the whole side wall of a junk shop. When, from sheer physical exhaustion, Benvenuto could dance no longer, and the hurdy-gurdy had moved on to pastures fresh, he stood and feasted his eyes with the ecstasy of a Fra Lippo Lippi upon the physiognomy of Chinatown Joe.

But the gong of the police patrol and the clang of a fire engine awoke him to the stern duties of life. He must not waste precious time upon mere pleasures of the senses; there were new fields to be con-
quered. Under the horses’ noses he darted in a vain attempt to see the rummy in the patrol wagon, through Orchard on to Allen Street. The Ginny peanut man was rashly passing the time of day with the lady who operated the ermine push cart. Benvenuto hastily filled his shirt with peanuts until he bore more resemblance to a pigeon than any other fowl of the air, and hurried on.

Through a dusky window he could see Chin Loo ironing shirts. There was just time to shout, “Chinky, Chinky!” and go through before Chin Loo could reach the doorway with his flatiron raised threateningly.

Then on, farther and ever farther.

Under the bridge, Benvenuto met a charity representative. There was no mistaking the genus. He attached himself to her long enough to work upon her feelings in his mixture of English and liquid Italian, and extract from her five cents on the plea of a sick baby at home, which he promptly spent for bananas to reinforce the inner man. The fruit man was busy shining his anaemic apples with a black cloth and a little silver polish. Such a symmetrical pyramid he had made of them, but Benvenuto knew where lay the keystone of the arch. Dexterously he extracted the proper apple, and then dashed on, looking back with glee at the havoc he had wrought.

What was that just ahead? Oh, happy sight! A basement shop with a tenement pile above it, in the window a blond wig reposing in a gild fruit dish, and the sign,

“Antonio Battino, Artistical Tonsorial Parlors,”

attested to the occupation of the owner.

From the door came the refreshing odor of frying garlic. As he plodded along, Benvenuto could picture the scene. There would be spaghetti, yards of it, for the just and the unjust alike. One could slip in unobserved and partake of the feast, and be made so gloriously welcome. No embarrassing remarks would be made as to one’s protracted and enforced absence; for the maternal Battino questioned not the exits nor the entrances of her offspring.

Down the steps, through the “artistical parlors,” and out of sight went a tired little boy. Rejoice again, ye gods, rejoice exceedingly! In spite of the efforts of Organized Charity, Benvenuto Battino, the unregenerate, is home.