

"When did *you* arrive, Mr. Burton?" she asked, "and how long have you been officiating as child's companion? You're certainly a happy-looking trio—so unconventional. I hate to see children all dressed up and stiff as little manikins, when they go out to ride. And you look as if you'd been having *such* a good time with them."

"I—I assure you, Miss Mayton," said I, "that my experience has been the exact reverse of a pleasant one. If King Herod were yet alive I'd volunteer as an executioner, and engage to deliver two interesting corpses at a moment's notice."

"You dreadful wretch!" exclaimed the lady. "Mother, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Burton,—Helen Lawrence's brother. How is your sister, Mr. Burton?"

"I don't know," I replied; she has gone with her husband on a fortnight's visit to Captain and Mrs. Wayne, and I've been silly enough to promise to have an eye to the place while they're away."

"Why, how delightful!" exclaimed Miss Mayton. "*Such* horses! *Such* flowers! *Such* a cook!"

"And *such* children," said I, glaring suggestively at the imps, and rescuing from Toddie a handkerchief which he had extracted from my pocket, and was waving to the breeze."

"Why, they're the best children in the world. Helen told me so the first time I met her this season. Children will be children, you know. We had three little cousins with us last summer, and I'm sure they made me look years older than I really am."

"How young you must be, then, Miss Mayton!" said I. I suppose I looked at her as if I meant what