

**'TWIXT CUP
& LIP, ETC**

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Twixt Cup & Lip, Etc by Elizabeth Linton

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ELIZABETH LINTON

**'TWIXT CUP
& LIP, ETC**

'Twixt
Cup and
Lip, Etc.

By *Carabini*
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Author of
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"Under Which Lord," etc.

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'TWIXT CUP AND LIP

CHAPTER I

THE cousins had never been really good friends. There had, of course, been the show and semblance of familiar good-fellowship, as belongs to respectable English households, but the under-current had been one of enmity and discord from the beginning; and none but themselves knew how false those smooth appearances were. They had been rivals all through. From the first day when Guy Armytage returned home from his long absence abroad, bringing his beautiful little son and that superb

A

foreign wife, who held her head so high and shrank from her husband's family with what looked like such indomitable pride, to this last, when Beltrain had carried it over his cousin Lambert in the most important event of their lives, bad blood between the two boys had simmered, if not boiled over.

The very Fates seemed to have marked them out as enemies, not friends. Young Beltrain, the son of the elder brother, had all the advantages which Lambert, the son of the younger, wanted. He had beauty, grace, breeding, more than ordinary intelligence, and beyond and above all, that nameless charm which acts like a spell on men and women alike—that wonderful magnetic power which sweeps the very heart out of those who listen to that

persuading voice and look into those compelling eyes. But Lambert was heavily built in figure, and of the fair-haired, red-skinned, bull-dog type in face; a trifle boorish in manner, slow in understanding, and with that tenacity of mind which marks a certain intellectual poverty—in every way the exact contrast of his cousin, who had inherited from his Italian mother so much more than from his English father.

In worldly goods, too, Beltrain would be far better provided for than Lambert when their respective fathers should have joined the majority. To Guy, as to the elder brother, the family estate had naturally descended—as it would to Beltrain in due course of inheritance and entail—whereas, to Lambert's father had gone only

the younger son's portion, which was eked out into sufficiency by his wife's dowry. Thus Beltrain was in every way the better equipped of the two, and the rugged pride of the chauvinist English boy had to confess the supremacy of this half-foreigner with the outlandish Christian name, the dead-white skin and blue-black hair, the slim figure, small hands and feet and graceful bearing of his Southern origin—this intruder into the sturdy race of the Armytages. Intruder, for all that he was the son of the Head of the House, for was he not also the son of a heathenish Italian stranger?

First in his class at school, and the prize-winner of the year—first in the lighter exercises and athletics proper to their adolescence—though in feats of purely

muscular strength Lambert was the conqueror—first in friendship and in fortune, how should his cousin not hate this half-Italian lad? He would have been more than human else; and assuredly the humanity of Lambert Armytage was by no means of so superior a quality as this. And now, when in the last supreme contest between them Beltrain had again come off victorious—when Lambert had been refused and that other the next week accepted—the hatred which had hitherto discreetly smouldered blazed out heaven-high, and the rejected suitor of pretty Faith Morrison was at heart neither more nor less than a murderer.

Little cared the happy lovers for the dark looks and mental torments of this poor, discomfited soul. A union of perfect