

# FROM TIMES PAST ...

## THE DEVIL'S PUNCHBOWL

By Jeremiah S. Clark

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You may locate it, if you will, beside the Old Malpeque Road, amid the Granville hills, and almost on the stage road from Breadalbane to the shore. It is no bottomless lake, nor horrible hole, hidden far away amid untrodden forests, nor is it mentioned in guide-books as a centre of attraction where strange wild creatures dwell, and tourists travel in the summertime. True, Brimstone Hollow lies quite close at hand; and awful are the legends that were once quite sagely told, though now of course forgotten since men have "so much to do." See it and live; then drink of it and die.

Why yes, I have been there, in early April, too; in fact I saw it yesterday, and that is why I write. It was a wild uncanny place; great snow-banks lined the border round, and held the lofty spruce-limbs firmly bound;

"Gray birch and aspen wept beneath,"

a score of petty torrents rushed from under twenty jutting rocks, and mingled in the hole below as many varied tints of red. Down thirty feet I climbed alone, within that roaring bowl of punch. It is a fiendish place at any time, but yesterday the task would baffle any tongue. I am no adept at describing punch, but here flowed every liquor true to name as are the mixtures famous vendors blend.

Yonder is the full red wine pouring over its precipice! that, - what may it not be, with its peaty tint, as it oozes from amongst fallen leaves? while, here at hand, various translucent streams pour in their contributions, with these pearly jets whose each drop glitters as it falls into the seething bowl.

How the place re-echoed as the streamlets rattled down! tumbling sharp rocks the frost had burst a few short months before, and held until an added warmth released them for their downward plunge, - how the hoarse roar reverberated in that pent-up bowl, until thrown upward to the vault above! I revelled in my new discovery, it was a feast to stand there and enjoy it all alone. I spoke aloud; I tried my voice to Bryant's famous lines: -

"To him who in the love of Nature  
Holds communion with her visible forms,  
She speaks a various language....."

Here I had found a miniature Niagara; with a far deeper crescent, and I think a richer bass; for the echoes were caught up and carried to my ear, not lost in the awful lunge and roar of that mighty mother of waters, which still disappointed me from every stand, until I went beneath its tons of spray, and felt its mighty power thrill my soul. Niagara's voice is grand - but twenty times a season on our outside shore we have sea-scapes almost as grand as any in the world; and even here we may learn many things, if we but cultivate the ears that hear.

