

**WHO WERE THE  
FIRST MINERS?**

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Who Were the First Miners? by Anonymous

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**ANONYMOUS**

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THE PRAIRIE DOG



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"Well said, old mole! Canst work 't' the earth so fast  
A worthy plougher!"

SHAKESPEARE.

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1874.



## WHO WERE THE FIRST MINERS?

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BLIND MOLE CASTS COPPED HILLS.



F all the seasons of the year, surely Spring is the most glorious. Does any other make an equal impression on the imagination and heart of man? The long dreariness of Winter is ended, and the gloom which, like the dulness on the face of Nature, has more or less prevailed over our spirits, passes away. We feel a fresh vigour in our frame, a renewed elasticity in our minds: we begin to hope once more. How can it be otherwise? When we watch the trees putting forth their buds and the flowers their blossoms—when we see that the brooks wear a brighter sparkle—when we know that the air is merry with the songs of birds—when we gaze delightedly as the mist gathers its trailing wreaths of silver up the green



hill-sides—when we perceive it lifted up from valley and plain like a crystal veil which has hitherto concealed their picturesque outlines,—how can we do otherwise than rejoice with a most innocent gladness? how can we do otherwise than exult that the beauty of earth and heaven has come back to us once more? As the rainbow throwing its many-coloured arch across the cloudy firmament is a token that the earth shall never again be wasted by destroying waters; so is the return of Spring a sign that God's mercy shall never fail us, but that our hearts shall always have cause for thankfulness and hope.

It is a morning in April, and sweet sights and sounds summon us abroad. As we tread the beaten path beside the old hedgerow, we hear the familiar voice of the cuckoo, though we cannot see his form. We note that a beautiful shadow of greenery is beginning to fall upon the woods and groves around us—a tender green, which has something very charming in its delicacy. The leaves of the elm are more than half-developed; the long drooping foliage of the silver birch drops over its golden flowers; the ash, always shy and timid, is less forward than any of its fellows—less forward even than the oak, which is never in a hurry to put out its glossy, metallic-looking leaves. Observe how the clusters of the laburnum drop gold among the gardens and plantations;

how the leaves of the beech sparkle in the sunshine ; how the fruit-trees—plum, and cherry, and apple—look as if they had been clothed in a fairy attire of pink and white. And what a fragrance comes upon the fresh morning breeze !—sweeter than any incense poured out before the shrines of heathen temples. No wonder that the bees whirl about and around the honied flowers, and hasten to rife them of their scented treasures.



THE MEADOW.

But not only are the bees on the alert ; all animated nature is astir. The beetle comes forth to sun itself in the increasing radiance of the day. The spider has begun to deck the hedges with the silver lines of its wondrous woof. How greedily the cattle refresh themselves with the juicy grasses ! How pleasant it is to see the green slope dappled with the sportive lambs, and to mark the wild antics of the colts as they disport themselves in the sheltered paddock ! And then the birds ! They are all around us and

above us, singing as if they could never give full expression to all the happiness with which their tiny bosoms throb. Ever and anon we catch sight of the white wing of the swallow, as he flies to and fro with materials to build his nest. Sparrows are perched on every bough, or on the thatched roof of the barn, or the house-tops, or among the dense ivy and laurel which have clambered up the old church-tower. Flitting



SPARROWS ON HOUSE-TOP.

from spray to spray, like "a disembodied spirit," the white-throat dazzles us with her snowy breast. Hovering above yonder patch of furze, now rich with its golden ingots, the linnets sing with might and main; while from the very cope, as it seems, of the deep blue sky, the lark's song falls upon us like the echoes of a heavenly harp.

"The winter is over and gone," says Solomon; "the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." *The flowers appear*