

chance for plants to exist they seemed to have grown, died, and turned to earth. here and there, too, as the party made their way from cell to cell there were proofs that various animals had taken possession of the rough shelters and brought the prey they had captured, stores of well gnawed bones lying scattered about; but saving the traces left of construction, cutting out of the rock and building in, they found nothing to show what kind of people they were who had lived there, nothing to prove how far back it was in the world's history that the rock city had been occupied by a teeming population. how long is it since people lived here, father was asked by chris, after they had been wandering about from cell to cell but not finding any way of getting higher without a dangerous climb from the terrace outward. ah, you are asking what has been puzzling me, replied the doctor, and i seem to be faced by a blank wall built up between now and the past. if we could find anything in the shape of weapons or household implements, one might make a guess; but every trace we have found is of the last inhabitants. well, that ought to do, said chris. but i mean the pumas or jaguars that seem to have here and there turned the cells into caves, and left their gnawed bones about. they may have lived here fifty years ago, a hundred years, or five. but there is one thing evident, and it is this that the people who lived here chose the place as being one that they could make into a stronghold, one which they could fortify so as to defend themselves from their enemies. what enemies, sir asked ned sharply. ah, lady im going to paint, i open the door with my own key and find the hunchback there or something, by the table painting her lips red with my paintbrush, and meanwhile her little sisters will be keeping guard for her, moving about and causing chaos in every corner of the room. or else, like happened yesterday, i mite come back home late in the evening please forgive my appearance and the room being in a mess, it is to do with them so, i mite come home late in the evening and want to go to bed, then i feel something pinching my leg, look under the bed and pull another of them out from under it. i dont know why it is they bother me like this, i expect youve just seen that i do nothing to encourage them to come near me. and they make it hard for me to do my work too, of course. if i didnt get this studio for nothing id have moved out a long time ago. just then, a little voice, tender and anxious, called out from under the door, titorelli, can we come in now no, answered the painter. not even just me, by myself the voice asked again. not even just you, said the painter, as he went to the door and locked it. meanwhile, had been looking round the room, if it had not been pointed out it would never have occurred to him that this wretched little room could be called a studio. it was hardly long enough or broad enough to make two steps. everything, floor, walls and ceiling, was made of wood, between the planks narrow gaps could be seen. across from where was, the bed stood against the wall under a covering of many different colours. in the middle of the room a picture stood on an easel, covered over with a shirt whose arms dangled down to the ground. behind was the window through which the fog in the navy, until he found that he had been the owner of what is called a dry goods store, which seems to mean a shop where things are sold which are not good to eat or drink such as drapery. at last somebody said, that as there was a public house called the duke of wellington at the corner of the street, there probably had been a nearer one called the nelson, which had been burnt down, and that the man who built the nelson had built the house with the spruce fir before it, and that so the name had arisen. an explanation which was just so far probable, that public houses and fires were of frequent occurrence in those parts. but this has nothing to do with the story. only we must say, as we said before, and as we should have said had we been living there then, the child we speak of lived in the little white house with one spruce fir just in front of it. of all the children who looked forward to the christmas tree, he looked forward to it the most intensely. he was an imaginative child, of a simple, happy nature, easy to please. his father was an englishman, and in the long winter evenings he would tell the child tales of the old country, to which his mother would listen also. perhaps the parents enjoyed these stories the most. to the boy they were new, and consequently delightful, but to the parents they were old; and as regards some stories, that is better still. what kind of a bird is this on