

a day, never missed to halt and attempt conversation; with small result, however.

"It's a wonder to me," he grumbled at last, "how men of your age can risk scramblin' about on ladders with your mouths constantly full o' nails."

In the evenings they supped together. Mrs Bowdler had made free to suggest this.

"Which," said Mrs Bowdler in magnificent ana-coluthon, "if we see it as we ought, this bein' no ordinary occasion, but in a manner of speakin' one of Potentates and Powers and of our feelin's in connection therewith; by which I allude to our beloved Queen, whom Gawd preserve!—Gawd bless her! I say, and He *will*, too, from what I know of 'im—and therefore deservin' of our yunited efforts; and, that bein' the case, it would distinkly 'elp, from the point of view of the establishment (meanin' Palmerston and me) if we (meanin' . . . sir, and Captain Hunken) could make it . . . have our meals in common. . . . The ear . . . were not above it," she added. "Not th . . . I may use the expression—by a long

She continued delicately that afterwards neither Cai nor 'Bias could remember precisely at what date—whether on the Wednesday or on the Thursday—they slipped back into the old comfortable groove.

The arch occupied their thoughts. After supper, as they sat and smoked, their talk ran on it: on details of its construction; on the chances (exiguous indeed!) of its being eclipsed by rivals in the town, some in course of construction, a few as yet existent only in the promises of rumour.