

AUSTRALIAN BYWAYS

faithful terms; and the subject of that discussion was the advisability of disposing of the Malays. The Malays heard every word that was spoken, but, having no knowledge of the blacks' language, could not understand a single fateful syllable, and were therefore neither warned nor perturbed, but doubtless, if they attended at all, fancied that the conversation had to do with the road to Bowen Strait, or some such matter as that. A man may here employ his imagination at pleasure—construct for himself an Australian tropical swamp, isolated from any chance of a saving interruption, and a little group of castaway Malays resting in the illusion of security, and a band of naked blackfellows, and an exchange of reassuring smiles and a casually proceeding discussion, continued freely within hearing of the doomed wretches whom it concerned, but all unknown to them. As a matter of fact, the following discussion is not invented at all, but paraphrased in colloquial English from the testimony adduced at the trial, and fairly represents what occurred.

"Let's kill 'em."

"Oh no; we don't want to kill 'em."

"Yes; let's kill 'em. It will be much easier to take their goods away from them."

"Well, how'll we kill 'em?"

"Let's cut some clubs and club 'em."

"If we kill 'em we'll get into trouble."

"No, we won't. Nobody will ever know anything about it."

"Oh, what's the use of killing 'em?"

"Well, let's go in the bush and cut the clubs, anyhow."

"Might as well cut the clubs."