

do not know if our American pursuers

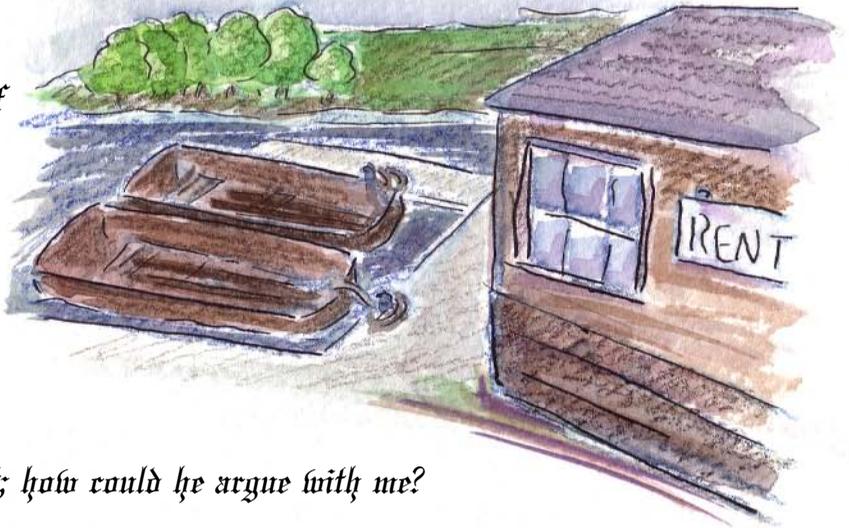
were actively watching for us, or if they had decided to make the best of their visit and take in the May Day festivities while waiting for us to emerge, but at the corner of the Botanic Gardens, where Rose Lane comes into the High, the straining silence was broken by loud American accents: "Hey! There he is!" And the hunt was on again. I spoke in Holmes' ear, ordering him to abandon me. He hesitated, being neither cowardly nor disloyal, but even he could see the logic in my suggestion. He bent down enough to vanish in the crowd, while I appropriated a nearby furled umbrella (in any English crowd, there will always be a man who doubts the clear sky overhead) and tripped one attacker, jabbed the second in the stomach, and nudged the third into the large, intoxicated Rugby player beside him.

With that trio temporarily disposed of, and making certain they had seen me, their unlikely assailant, I pushed into the crowd, crossing to the Magdalene side of the High and making for Magdalene Bridge.

Halfway across, I ducked down to make my way back up the human stream, ducking into the grounds of the Botanic Garden and making for the river.

Holmes had located a punt, worked its anchoring pole out of the bottom, and was waiting for me. I heard a shout behind me—English, not American—and tumbled into the boat. He pushed off, and I turned to face the boat's irate owners.

"Terribly sorry," I called to them. "There's a trio of Americans just behind you who said they'd be happy to repay you for the hire cost. You take it up with them, there's a good lad."



A sweet old lady in a boat; how could he argue with me?