



ard as it is to believe,

fifteen years have passed since Ms Laurie King published —under her name— the first volume of the Mary Russell memoirs. She recounts (in her Editor's Preface to that volume, which was given the title *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*) her puzzlement as to what these manuscripts were and why she was the recipient of these multiple volumes of hand-written (for the most part) manuscripts recounting the life of a stranger and, moreover, a stranger who claims to have been married to one Sherlock Holmes. Now, the fifteenth anniversary of the publication of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, may be as good a time as any to answer that puzzle.

It began in the winter of 1989, when a bout with a troublesome although ultimately meaningless illness left me with an awareness that, in my ninetieth year, I was perhaps not to be immortal. It was time to gather my thoughts for posterity and make some arrangement for their preservation.

I might have done it long before, truth to tell, but for the identity of my husband. When one is married to a person of considerable fame, one tends to choose invisibility over all else. And since any memoirs I was to pass on would be of occasionally inflammatory nature, I needed to choose my literary agent with care. Little did I realize that what that decision would cost me.

