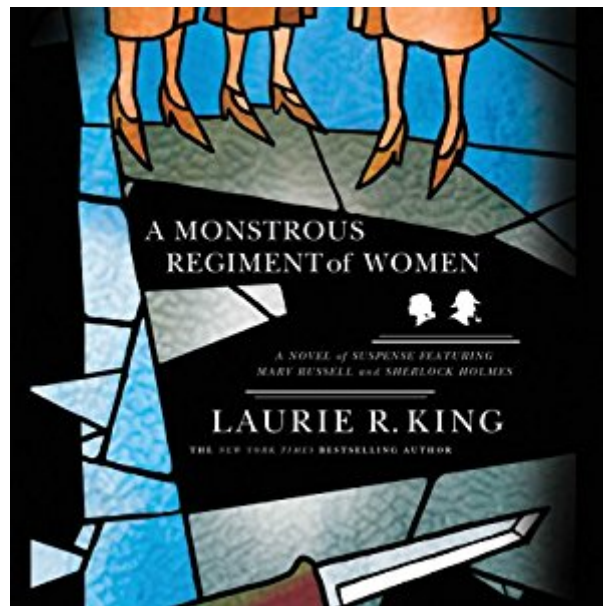


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# A Monstrous Regiment Of Women: A Novel Of Suspense Featuring Mary Russell And Sherlock Holmes: The Mary Russell Series, Book 2



## Synopsis

Winner of the Nero Wolfe Award It is 1921 and Mary Russell - Sherlock Holmes's brilliant apprentice, now an Oxford graduate with a degree in theology - is on the verge of acquiring a sizable inheritance. Independent at last, with a passion for divinity and detective work, her most baffling mystery may now involve Holmes and the burgeoning of a deeper affection between herself and the retired detective. Russell's attentions turn to the New Temple of God and its leader, Margery Childe, a charismatic suffragette and a mystic, whose draw on the young theology scholar is irresistible. But when four bluestockings from the Temple turn up dead shortly after changing their wills, could sins of a capital nature be afoot? Holmes and Russell investigate, as their partnership takes a surprising turn.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Second in terms of release date but third in terms of the timeline (O Jerusalem should actually be read second, its story taking place right before the end of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* when Mary is 19), *A Monstrous Regiment of Women* finds the brilliant Mary Russell approaching her 21st birthday, questioning the nature of her relationship with Sherlock Holmes. In an effort to distance herself from him a bit, Mary renews an Oxford friendship and finds herself drawn to the charismatic leader of a feminist church/society movement, intellectually and spiritually. A series of deaths attached to the society sends Mary and by proxy, Holmes himself into the investigation. As with the first book (and the following books), *Regiment* is primarily about Mary. Finally at an age where she

inherits her parents vast estate, she struggles with her newfound freedom, the burden of responsibility and starts to look at parts of herself and Holmes that she'd been able to avoid when she was a girl. Mary is exposed to the seamiest sides of London as she tries to balance depending on Holmes with wanting to do things her own way. A lot has been made of the romance between Mary and Holmes - something the author could have avoided entirely if she'd have just not mentioned Mary's age. She's written as far, far older than her calendar years; it also wasn't that uncommon around the turn of the century to find a young woman married off to a much older man. I'm not a Sherlock Holmes purist, which enables more suspension of logic, but the romance is still sparingly written and is actually kind of sweet. If anything, a reader looking for passionate clinches and sex is not going to find it in these books; even compared to the tamest of today's romance novels, the scenes here are the mildest of mild. The mystery itself is well-written and paced, with the exception of the middle section about the society which are a little dull. The clues, confrontations and eventual solving are interesting, the extra little details about London in the early 20's is fun to read. There's a long passage towards the ending where Mary falls into the hands of some criminals that I thought was particularly well done; it goes a long way towards the aging of Mary and towards her understanding of Holmes. This was a really enjoyable and fast book to read. I recommend it for anyone who likes authors as diverse as Agatha Christie, Patricia Cornwell, Elizabeth Peters, J.D. Robb and P.D. James. A Holmes purist would probably have some issues with Mary, but if you like the idea of a tough, intelligent and capable feminist solving crimes, then you'll enjoy these books.

In reading several other opinions of this book, it seems that for "traditionalists" the romance in this story might be off putting. I, however, a mystery and romance fan, found this to be one of the most compellingly romantic stories I have ever read. While at its heart it's a suspenseful mystery with wonderful action sequences, I found that the on going dynamic between Russell and Holmes added depth of character in a way that most cozy mysteries often overlook. Age meant nothing, Mary's confusion was sincere and Holmes has now become a great romantic hero. Well done.

In this sequel to *THE BEEKEEPER'S APPRENTICE*, Laurie King gives us the now mature Mary Russell, claiming her inheritance and becoming involved in the investigation of a charitable organization run by an extremely charismatic woman, whose wealthy members seemed to be dying and leaving their inheritance to said organization. Mary works undercover and with her newly found wealth makes herself a target, with serious consequences. King creates a real sense of menace in this installment and Russell's peril is strongly rendered and will make the reader feel true

compassion for her. Holmes's presence is felt throughout the novel, and King does a fine job of staying true to this character, fleshing out some of his personality while never forgetting that he is the "world's greatest detective." The eventual match of Russell and Holmes may put some traditionalists out of sorts, but I find it a way to breathe new vitality into this legendary character, and in Mary Russell, King has developed a fine and equal partner for the detective.

I had heard mixed reviews of *A Monstrous Regiment of Women* before I read it, directly after its prequel, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*. I didn't think I would enjoy it nearly as much as the first one--I was wrong. For fans of Mary Russell, this is surely a book to be enjoyed. I read the Holmes/Russell novel for Sherlock Holmes, however. Though he isn't in the book much at this time, the scenes he -is- in are absolutely charming and unforgettable. Many people don't enjoy Holmes in this book--To them he doesn't seem to be the Holmes of Watson. Naturally, he isn't. He's seen from an entirely different perspective in Russell's narration, he's allowing Russell to take the case on her own, rather than stepping in and doing the work for her--And he finally has a woman astute and edgy enough for him to realize that women aren't always something to scoff at. This woman happens to be Mary Russell, thirty-nine years his junior with an intelligence, arrogance, and attitude reminiscent of Holmes himself. Mary Russell is, indeed, Holmes as a young woman--including her own weakness to opium derivatives. I'm not a fan of mystery novels as it is, so I found the character work in the King novels fascinating. Russell's narrative focuses on the people involved, and personal matters, rather than just the case. You get a sense of who people are and why they're involved, not who did it in the where with the what. In order to grasp all of this development, you MUST read *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* before this book. *A Monstrous Regiment of Women* contains some of the best scenes in all of the Holmes/Russell series--Short passages between Holmes and Russell will jump out from the page. You can hear them in your mind and the characters will suddenly become real. Anyone who followed Holmes and Russell through the first six years will find true delight in reading this book.

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