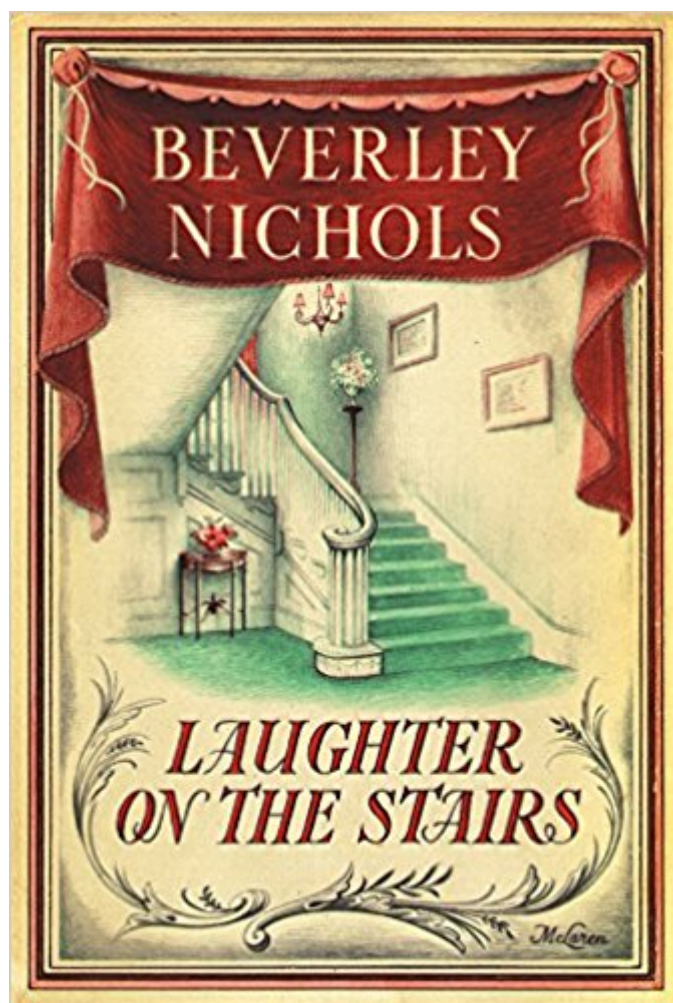


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# Laughter On The Stairs (Beverley Nichols Trilogy Book 2)



## Synopsis

In this, the second volume of the Merry Hall trilogy, Nichols is less concerned with his garden and more with his house, but the story does include the memorable characters Our Rose, the ditzy floral designer, and the cantankerous gardener Oldfield.

## Book Information

Series: Merry Hall Trilogy

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

“The very model of gardening insouciance. . . . wrote at least once about everything and. . . is nearly the Bertie Wooster of gardening, and I say nearly only because some would consider it an insult to be called the Bertie Wooster of anything.”  
•The New York Times Book Review  
“Be prepared. Beverley Nichols’s garden books are part PG Wodehouse and part James Barrie—full of hilarious Jeeves-like characters and events, with moments of Peter Pan magic.”  
•Pacific Horticulture  
“The Nichols books are gardening classics; after reading one volume, you will want to read the others, so it would be best to buy all three at the outset.”  
•Journal of the New England Garden History Society  
“Find a comfortable chair, relax, and enjoy the Nichols’s flights of literary fancy but be warned, once started, his books are hard to put down.”  
•American Rhododendron Society Journal  
“Nichols, a prolific writer best known for his gardening books, transforms the large and small happenings of a sleepy British village and country estate into mock high drama, retelling events such as a burglary, a ghost sighting, and home and garden

renovations with humor and insight. *SciTech Book News*  
 "You'll find laughter on the stairs and everywhere else Nichols takes you as he renovates his old home and garden. *Southern Living*  
 "The charm of Merry Hall, Laughter on the Stairs (mostly about the house) and Sunlight on the Lawn is undeniable, a mixture of the lyrical, the teasing, the understatedly witty and the self-mockingly camp. *The Daily Telegraph*  
 "A marvelously hilarious insight into people, plants and places. . . . If you have ever renovated an old house or garden, you'll love these books. *Traditional Gardening*  
 "For Beverley Nichols, this is a season of revival, and readers can be grateful for the chance once again to cultivate his acquaintance. *Victoria*

The second volume in the trilogy that began with *Merry Hall* (1951) continues Nichol's hilarious account of his tribulations in refurbishing a gracious Georgian house & garden.

Beverley Nichols is back with the second book of his *Merry Hall* trilogy, a lighthearted memoir by Mr. Nichols, who is a well bred Englishman who has found the Georgian home of his dreams, but must undo the tasteless "improvements" made by the former owner. Along the way, he deals with his staff, his neighbors and his cats in the delightful manner of the British. his white lies and foibles will make you think of P. G. Wodehouse. In this book, his focus is more on furnishing the manor, rather than correcting the landscaping. The characters we met in volume one return, along with a couple of new ones, Miss Mint, who is going through rough times and must sell a cottage she hasn't used in some time. The prospective buyer, a Miss Erica, is less endearing.

Last year I discovered the delights of reading Beverley Nichols' writing, based mostly around the commentary of life as lived by the British. And yesterday, in desperate need of having something to smile over, I picked up the second book in his *Merry Hall* trilogy, *Laughter on the Stairs*, and settled in as the news on the telly gave dire predictions of an oncoming storm. One needs those little pleasures, after all. Now that he has renovated a good deal of the Georgian house, *Merry Hall*, in the suburbs of London, you would think that author Beverley Nichols would find the spirit to sit back and relax for a while. But no, he's determined to continue his polishing of this Georgian mansion that has fallen on hard times. Especially as to what to do about a monstrosity of a stained glass window. He hates it with a passion, his neighbors, Our Rose, and Miss Emily, adore it. Everyone exclaims over it, with delight or horror, depending on his or her taste. But as with life, a tragedy occurs and the

window is broken, which sets off a curious sequence of events -- thieves enter through the mermaid's bottom. Soon enough, a series of mixed blessings descend upon Merry Hall. Could it be that the ghosts of the property are making themselves known? There is Miss Mint, a woman of uncertain age, with a gentle manner, who is one of Nichols' neighbors, who sets off a conspiracy involving a well and a piece of property. The arrival of a fellow writer in their small village, with very mixed results. Another arrival, that of a new cat -- 'Five' -- who sets off a feline showdown in the drawing room. Along with the newcomers, there are some old favourites as well. Gaskin, Nichols' good right arm, and of course, Oldfield, are here. Miss Emily and Our Rose, two rivals and friends return as well. Marius and the somewhat sinister, all-knowing Bob are here too. And it simply would not be a Beverley Nichols' book without 'One' and 'Four.' But what really caught me with this book is Nichols' delight and growing interest in his home. A goodly portion of the book is spent in describing various rooms of his house, and how he is polishing them up. Such as trying to fit out his drawing room with his motley collection of things that have managed to survive World War II, and realizing that they're somewhat run down. On acquiring a set of antique chairs, he makes a comment that resonated so strongly that I am going to quote it here: If you possess even one beautiful object it teaches you more, by its constant proximity, than a hundred visits to museums. When I got to this line, I had to stop and read it again. And realized that yes, that Nichols was absolutely right here. That craving -- and enjoyment -- of something perfect is buried in all of us, and in our age of mass-production and plasticky sameness, we tend to skip by the more prosaic and ephemeral things in life, such as the work of an artist or craftsman of long ago, or the beauty that can be found in our own yards and nearby woods. This philosophy runs through this volume. I was captivated by Nichols' description of birds in his garden, or trying to create a musical illustration of 'One's' uniquely Siamese howl, or the wonders that Oldfield manages to coax out of the garden. It's that ability to stop and fully take in the moment that I envy him, and how he is able to bring his dreams and visions to life. A very few of us have that opportunity to do so, and Nichols is indulging it as far as his limits -- not to mention pocketbook -- will allow him to. Originally published as a set of magazine articles, Nichols compiled this collection of vignettes into three autobiographical volumes. *Laughter on the Stairs* is the second one, with *Sunlight on the Lawn* being the third one -- and one that I will be adding very soon to my collection. This new edition is published by Timber Press, Inc., and is a facsimile of the original 1955 edition, which also has wonderful black and white illustrations by William McLaren. There is a new introduction by Roy C. Dicks, and an index of all of the various plants that are mentioned in the text tucked away in the back. While you can read this without having read the first volume of tales in Merry Hall, I do suggest to take in that book first, as there are some

ideas and people that need to be introduced properly as so to fully enjoy them in this narrative. Joyously recommended, with a very solid five star rating.

After reading about Beverley Nichols in a gardening blog I borrowed the first book from the library. Enjoyed it so much, that I bought the whole series. Very charming books, with many laugh out loud moments. I give this series of books to friends that anyone gardening, and love cats.

Love Beverly Nichols witty writing style!

As an Anglophile, I'm enjoying the basic English life and the charming characters. Some may find it slow but Nichols is a wordsmith.

I have read this book several times. I love the style of writing and the humor. Never gets old!

A delightful read! Mr. Nichols (in a very "proper" British fashion) describes his hilarious adventures in home decorating and remodeling. His run-ins with his snobby neighbors can not be missed! If you love gardens, cats, home decorating, or if you just love to laugh; GET THIS BOOK! In fact, get all three books in this trilogy (ie: "Merry Hall", "Sunlight on the Lawn", and "Laughter on the Stairs").

Long ago I read 'Down the Garden Path' and when I saw this trilogy I naturally bought them. Not quite as attractive as the Garden Path but a relaxing, refreshing time dreaming of flowers and trees and shrubs -- As my old bones don't let me do too very much in the garden, these books give me such joy. And having recently rebuilt a house, I'm quite sympathetic!

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