



Beverley Nichols: A Life

Bryan Connan

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The reissuing of Beverley Nichols's delightful books by Timber Press has sparked renewed interest in this unjustly neglected writer. He burst onto the literary scene not long after his studies at Oxford, and his versatility was impressive; his successes included novels, plays, children's stories, biography, political commentary, and books on religion, travel, and gardening. He also composed for the musical stage and ghostwrote the autobiography of the famous singer Nellie Melba. He moved in fashionable and artistic circles where he attained a certain measure of celebrity.

Fame did not elude him, but greatness did. In his later years, Nichols was known chiefly for his books on gardens and cats, and he grew increasingly bitter about his failure to be accepted as a serious writer. Bryan Connan has written a fascinating study of a talented man in whom, in J. W. Lambert's phrase, a keen mind "functioned beneath the glad rags," and whose huge and diverse literary output chronicles the events, moods, and personalities of the fascinating age in which he lived.

This biography was first published in 1991 by Constable in the U.K., but its distribution was limited and it was never available in the United States. It will be of interest to the thousands of readers who have come to know Nichols through *Merry Hall*; they will discover an altogether more complex personality than the witty, sometimes sardonic persona he created in his writings.



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