



# Miss Cayley's Adventures

*Grant Allen*

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When her stepfather dies, Miss Lois Cayley finds herself alone in the world with only twopence in her pocket. Undaunted, the intelligent, attractive, and infinitely resourceful young woman decides to set off in search of adventure. Her travels take her from London to Germany, Italy, Egypt, and India, as she faces various challenges and meets an assortment of eccentric characters. But when her true love, Harold Tillington, finds himself accused of forging a will and faces prison, Miss Cayley will need all her ingenuity to investigate the case, solve the mystery, and save Harold from the diabolical plot!

One of the first novels to feature a female detective, Grant Allen's "Miss Cayley's Adventures" (1899) remains as witty, enjoyable, and engaging today as when first published. This edition includes a new introduction by Elizabeth Foxwell.

"Scholars might be loath to hear this, but, popular culture being the continuum that it is, "Miss Cayley's Adventures" can be seen as a superior example of the chick lit of its era. Its heroine remains to this day as appealing and amusing as any Bridget Jones, and her exploits are filled with moments of wit, action, and sheer fun." - Michele Slung, editor, "Crime on her Mind: Fifteen Stories of Female Sleuths from the Victorian Era to the Forties"

"Grant Allen's entertaining Miss Cayley is as lively now as when she first appeared in the "Strand" in 1898. The reprinting of "Miss Cayley's Adventures" is sure to please readers who admire active and clever women protagonists. Sheer fun." - Carolyn Hart, author of "Death Walked In"

"Mystery readers will be swept away by the adventures of Grant Allen's almost forgotten female sleuth, Miss Cayley. With her unique, independent, and most 'unladylike' behavior, the intelligent Miss Cayley plays an important role in the long line of distaff detectives. A must for mystery readers and academics." - Janet Rudolph, editor, "Mystery Readers Journal"

## Miss Cayley's Adventures Details

Date : Published April 23rd 2008 by Valancourt Books (first published 1899)

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Author : Grant Allen

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# From Reader Review Miss Cayley's Adventures for online ebook

## Jun-E says

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First was the sparkling wit and pure

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## Jessi says

I got this book for free from Google Books after reading about it on Smart Bitches and was mostly quite charmed by it (though it did take me a LONG time to read, especially on Overdrive and their persistent use of percentages rather than page numbers, what's the point of that, I might ask? I finally switched over to Aldiko and was so much happier). Unfortunately, this book is a product of its times and super racist. Anyway, Miss Lois Cayley is about to be kicked out of school and has very little money to her name. So she sets off on a grand adventure, hoping to work her way around the world. She immediately finds work as a companion for an old, crotchety woman and thwarts the robbery of the woman's jewels. Then she meets the woman's nephew. In a regular romance, this would've been the end of the story, resulting in marriage. In this book, Miss Cayley decides that a) she still wants adventure and b) she doesn't want him to be disinherited (he wouldn't mind and she doesn't want the money but she also doesn't want it to be a bone of contention with them later).

Along the way, Lois sells bicycles and typewriters. She sends for her friend Elsie who had been ill and they set off for a year in Italy and then in to Egypt.

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## Wealththeow says

Lois Cayley is the quick-witted, sharp-tongued, stout-hearted heroine of this sweet little novel. She's so clever and masterful that her various triumphs come as no surprise, but her asides are so amusing that her near-perfection is never annoying. The quips and bon mots are hilarious (see my status updates for examples), and the characters memorable. The women are just as capable, full of agency, and rife with both foibles and strengths (including higher mathematics), as the men. The n-word pops up a number of times once Lois gets to India, but the main Indian character is far more admirable than most of the other characters, and not "in spite" of his race or creed. (It's disheartening to realize this was printed as early as 1899, and yet over a hundred years later the truths Allen found self-evident are still being argued about.) Everything is handled with a light, airy touch, and the humor has a wonderfully dry tone to it. The plot veers into melodrama at the end, but it's all in good fun.

I wish this was part of a series, because I am loathe to part with the admirable Miss Cayley! Can be found online [here](#).

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## Yvette says

Serendipity, coincidence, ingenuity, and just plain dumb luck are all on the side of plucky heroine Lois

Cayley in Grant Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures*. At times the perfection of Miss Cayley wears a bit thin, but her personality and observations remain enjoyable throughout.

While the book was originally published in 1899, the writing style does not feel extremely dated. Some of the language, however, is no longer acceptable and the author chose to alter grammar to indicate that characters are speaking in German.

As I was reading *Miss Cayley*, I started thinking that this was probably the sort of book that Frederick Arbuthnot of "The Enchanted April" would have written, though his work would have been a bit more on the scandalous side than *Miss Cayley*. Then I read somewhere that one of Grant Allen's pseudonyms was J. Arbuthnot Wilson. Hmmm...

Sometimes it is nice to read a book where you know that everything will turn out well and this is just such a quick, enjoyable read. So glad I started following Gail Carriger around online, because I'm discovering little gems like this through her.

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## **Benjamin says**

I had heard of Grant Allen when I was researching H. G. Wells; like Wells, Allen was a popular writer, and there's some idea that some of Allen's semi-ghostly tales might have inspired parts of the future in Wells's *The Time Machine*. (Am writing this on my iPad, forgive inability to italicize.) At some point, this ended up on my list of things to read, and thanks to some LA traffic and the kind (and generally excellent) readers at Librivox, I was able to polish this off pretty quickly this week.

Now, I feel there are a few misconceptions I had when going into this: while titled as "adventures," this is much more like an episodic novel--there's a throughline of Miss Lois Cayley falling in love with, rejecting, accepting, and then proving the innocence of a man who is probably as clever and sharp-witted as Cayley. Unlike, for example, Sherlock Holmes's adventures, these really have to be read in order and as a complete set.

My second misconception is that Lois Cayley is a Holmesian detective: sure, she wanders around and gets into a few criminal scrapes--saving a woman's jewels from a potential thief masquerading as a high-born Frenchman, saving a widower from the ministrations of a fake doctor by discovering the chemistry-related trick he pulls on her, uncovering the forgery of a will--but not all of her adventures revolve around some form of detection. In fact, one of her adventures involves her beating a bunch of German men at a bicycle race with a new American-made bicycle; another involves her spirited away an English refugee woman from her Egyptian abductors. Not really a lot of detection going on there.

What does bring all of these adventures together--besides the throughline of her love and his dastardly cousin--is that most of them involve some level of exploitation or denigration of women that Lois Cayley prevents. In that way, this is much less the first female detective than it is a nice addition to turn-of-the-century feminism. (There is also what I take to be a measured anti-racist quality: the Indian prince that Cayley befriends has his downsides and his feudal nature is prime among them; but he rightly points out that, while he's an honored Indian prince when he meets the British in Britain, when he's in India, they can't tell the difference and think he's just another dirty Indian.)

It is also written in such a sprightly, humorous tone of voice, despite the heaviness of the subject matter.

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## Julie says

Miss Cayley is a positive-thinking and very capable lady who calls herself an "adventuress." There is a point in the book when you think life is just too easy for clever Miss Cayley, and then ... intrigue and mystery! A fun read. Funny dialogue too! My favorite line: "But who would marry such a piece of moist clay?"

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## Alisha says

Well, this novel is, shall we say, comprehensive.

Lois Cayley's stepfather dies. He is her last near relation and she is left penniless, so she quite naturally decides to take a trip around the world. Who wouldn't? Along the way she hunts out new sources of income, or sometimes things find her. By turns she is a temporary lady's maid for a cantankerous old woman, a bicycle racer, a living bicycle advertisement and saleswoman, house sitter, preventer of theft and fraud, tiger hunter (I don't like that part), journalist, honored guest of a maharajah, and entrepreneur. In the end she has to turn detective, because her fiance is accused of forging his uncle's will. Turns out the will really is forged, but it's an exact forged copy of the *real* will. Why would anyone need to forge, unaltered, a copy of a will? I leave it to your imagination (or read the book).

Lois turns out to be a rather comical narrator, and I'm glad that I finally determined that this is not a book to be taken seriously, because it would be impossible. I chuckle when she says things like,

*"My employer wrote, 'You are a born journalist.'*

*I confess this surprised me; for I have always considered myself a truthful person."*

And the pictures! Lots of old books of this sort have the occasional sketch scattered throughout, but this one has pictures every few pages, so that you might accurately imagine Lois' latest escapade.

Although there are no noticeable puns or plays on language, I have to say that I think this author is literarily (but not literally) related to P.G. Wodehouse. A similar sense of the ridiculous, and frequently over-the-top, but everything comes right by the end of the episode. Yes, this book is written in episodes, tied together by a few common threads.

Some may want to take note that there are a dozen or so uses of the N-word around the middle of the book, but only out of the mouth of a character you are not supposed to like anyway. Oddly enough, he's not talking about people of African descent, but those from India.

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## Mo says

### The Good

- Dry humor

*My employer wrote, 'You are a born journalist.' I confess this surprised me; for I have always considered myself a truthful person. Still, as he evidently meant it for praise, I took the doubtful compliment in good part, and offered no remonstrance."*

- Illustrations!

There are over 75 of them. I don't know why illustrations ever fell out of favor, I absolutely love them.

## **The Bad**

- Snappy Repartee

There is a bit too much of it between some of the characters. I am not a fan.

- Yawn!

The story drags in parts.

## **The Ugly**

- Non-PC... VERY non-PC

Derogatory terms are used to describe several racial groups. Readers could easily be insulted by the terminology.

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## **Catherine Siemann says**

My previous experience with Grant Allen was with his rather dreary New Woman novel, *The Woman Who Did*. When author Gail Carriger mentioned *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, it sounded like an entirely different take on the New Woman, and it is.

Miss Cayley is a recent graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, left penniless on the decease of her stepfather. She sets out to see the world with two shillings in her pocket, and succeeds brilliantly, precisely because of the qualities that make her a New Woman -- she's perceptive, intelligent, educated, and athletic. (At one point she manages to haul the object of her affections to safety after he's fallen down a mountainside.) She sees things in others that aren't always the common perceptions, and benefits because of the friendships this leads her to make. She runs through the entire New Woman repertoire of bicycling, typewriting, and journalism on the way.

Things are a little too easy for our heroine, but that's not necessarily a bad thing, in comparison to all the novels in which New Women suffer for their unconventionality and independence. I'd give it five stars, but British Imperialism raises its ugly head a bit too often.

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## **Sylvester says**

A sparkling beginning - audacious heroine decides to work her way around the world by her wits. At first, her spirit is refreshing and fun, but the "adventures" are more than serendipitous as they spin out, and become repetitive as a result. The last bit is on another tack altogether - so, uneven storytelling killed my enjoyment. A really excellent beginning, though, wish it had followed through.

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## **Nichol M. Harris says**

**Enjoyable read**

Good plot, very entertaining for the most part but as with most books depicting that era, a bit too much 'empty reading' in some parts for my taste. For persons who enjoy detailed, beat around the bush build up, its perfect. Totally enjoyed it, although I skipped thru some of the detailed writing.

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### **Emily says**

Missie will hate Miss Cayley's Adventures for the same reasons she hated Name of the Wind. Miss Cayley is too damn good at everything. But Name of the Wind was funny, there was real swashbucklement, the plot moved forward, it wasn't racist. Missie recommended Miss Cayley's Adventures to me based on this glowing Toast article: <http://the-toast.net/2014/09/03/lois-...> and it is a whole hell of a lot better than most New Woman literature, but that's not saying much. Miss Cayley shoots one tiger, but mostly she relies on her extensive wits and serendipity to travel around the world. On the train to Germany, she foils a jewel thief. The old lady with the jewels provide Miss Cayley's start-up capital and Miss Cayley is fallen in love with by the lady's rich nephew Harold. Miss Cayley wants to be not an adventuress but an adventuress so she refuses Harold's hand and continues her travels by winning a bicycle race and becoming a commissioned sales agent of a piston-action bicycle company. After foiling another plot by the jewel thief brigand, she and her friend set up a typing shop in Milan. Bicycles and typewriters are both extremely modern inventions to be embraced by the New Woman. In Egypt, she rescues a white woman from non-white people, and in India she meets a young potentate with the manners of a European and the soul of a dusky savage. With trouble brewing between Harold and the villain who's dogging her, Miss Cayley heads to Vancouver on a steamer, crosses Canada by express train, and disembarks at Quebec in time to take the speedboat back to London, thus ignoring North America in her round the world adventure, and foiling the villain once and for all in a clever courtroom maneuver. Miss Cayley's Adventures is not at all a bad book but it's not a good book either. It's "better than," if I may damn it with faint praise. Better than so many books of its era, but if you want overt, bad-ass, 1890s feminism, read The Shuttle. (And for globular circumnavigation Around the World in 80 Days is the obvious choice.)

<http://surfeitofbooks.blogspot.com/20...>

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### **elizabeth says**

Yay! Grant Allen's novel "An African Millionaire" is one of my all time faves, so I was stoked for this. The fact that I could read it for free on Kindle was the awesome icing on the awesome cake. Allen, a progressive thinker, creates an independent female protagonist who travels around on a bike thwarting crime and being amazing. Read this. Get on it.

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### **Deena says**

I haven't read a story from this period in some time, so it was a refreshing treat. Lois is great fun, and well developed.

Fair warning: there is some period racism here. If it's going to bother you, don't read this. I didn't find it overwhelming, but I'm also willing (usually) to allow a period its realities.



Attitudes towards gender, social class, nationalism, and race are fairly typical for the time; Mr. Allen was by no means ahead of his day. That being said, it's fun to see the ways in which he demonstrates that some of those attitudes were changing. Lois is a modern girl in many respects, but admits to clinging to certain old-fashioned values. She gets her HEA eventually, but the journey has a great deal of lite suspense to liven things up.

Mr. Allen's writing is often quite amusing; several of Lois's turn of phrase in her first person narrative are very funny. I don't know that I'd go out of my way to read many of his others (although I down-loaded a non-fiction title in addition to this one), but this one was refreshing fun.

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## **Soup says**

Bother! I *really* wanted to like, even love, this book! What should have been an excellent turn of the century "new woman" novel just couldn't hold it together across so many silly & unlikely adventures.

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## **Summer says**

[blackface (hide spoiler)]

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## **SmartBitches says**

### **Full review at Smart Bitches, Trashy Books**

*Miss Cayley's Adventures*, written in 1899, is so adorable that if it were a person I'd marry it. I loved this book so much, particularly the first half, which is pure delight. In the second half of the book, Miss Cayley's travels bring us face to face with some racial issues which are treated somewhat progressively but fall far short of achieving a successful resolution. While the book is quite progressive in terms of race given the year in which it was written, I will be addressing some failings on the part of our heroine to fully accept a character from India as her peer.

*Miss Cayley's Adventures* starts with these delightful words, "On the day when I found myself with twopence in my pocket, I naturally made up my mind to go around the world."

One of the joys of the story is how progressive it is in terms of women's rights, given the year in which it's written. Miss Cayley loves the Cantankerous Old Lady, who is shrewd and stubborn, and she loves her best friend, who is frail and nervous, and she saves Harold from falling off a cliff as well as from other trials.

I was sad that Miss Cayley never fully accepted the prince as her equal, (this is why I gave the book an A rather than an A+), but I was also immensely touched by his character. Of course I was thrilled by the escapades of Miss Cayley, and even better I was wildly entertained. The book is romantic, funny, exciting, and interesting. The illustrations, by Gordon Browne, are charming. Miss Cayley never has to repent for her daring – her actions have consequences but always ones she can cope with, and she revels in a happy ending. The book is sparkling and hopeful and for the most part, it made me happy.

- Carrie S.

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### **Gail Carriger says**

Marvelous story from shortly before the turn of the century. Bright and fun and easy to read. Miss Cayley is a New Woman determined to travel the world on only her wits, she is educated, stubborn, independent, and remorseful. (Not to mention beautiful, charming and cutting.) This book does not read at all old fashioned, it's quite easy and fun.

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### **Rose says**

Miss Cayley sets out upon the world with tuppence in her pocket, a college education (Girton College at Cambridge), plenty of vim, and a determination to go 'round the world. And she manages it too! She moves along in easy stages .. traveling to Germany as a maid/companion to a crusty dowager, wins a race, sells bicycles in Switzerland, sets up a typing business in Florence, writes travelogues up and down the Nile, etc, etc and generally keeps herself busy and productive. Meanwhile, she deals with rogues and intrigue, and falls in love. She is a thoroughly likable heroine.

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### **Nancy Oakes says**

Well, that was fun! Beyond the entertainment value, though, it's interesting to see the character of this highly independent Victorian woman as written by a man of the period.

Because I don't really read reviews or too much in the way of plot synopses before I pick up a book, I assumed this book was going to be another Victorian work of the exploits of a female detective much along the lines of the previous ones I've read and talked about here. But no -- with Miss Lois Cayley I got way more than I bargained for. She is, like Victorian detective Loveday Brooke (*The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*) an example of the "New Woman" of fin-de-siècle Victorian literature; at the same time, unlike Loveday Brooke, Miss Cayley does not make detection her specific profession. She is 21, has just finished her studies at Girton College and although (according to her friend Elsie Petheridge) her next logical step would be to teach, Miss Cayley is not at all interested in becoming one of the group of "dear good schoolmistresses." She views herself as a "rebel" with a plan:

"going out, simply in search of adventure. What adventure may come, I have not at the moment the faintest conception. The fun lies in the search, the uncertainty, the toss-up of it."

She becomes involved in a number of adventures and travels all over the globe and we are there to follow her exploits. This book is pure joyous fun to read but at the same time, makes a powerful statement (or two or more) about independent women of the Victorian era.

certainly recommended!!

<http://www.crimesegments.com/2018/03/...>

