

Can you wonder that I look forward to being reviewed again by this gentleman? I shall feel an eager anticipation as I search among my press-cuttings, after the appearance of this present volume, for the name of his halfpenny journal. I can fancy his indignation at a picture that speaks—a completer mess even than the dragging in of a manuscript at the end of *Lucinda*! This was shocking—at least, it must have been, as otherwise this gentleman would have been talking nonsense.

But my button-holed readers must be expecting me to come to the point. It is this. "*A Likely Story*" is an honest, if a humble, attempt to satisfy all parties—except, indeed, the last party just cited, whom I should be sorry to satisfy. It combines on one canvas the story of a family incident that is purely Victorian—though, alas, the era came to an end so shortly afterwards—with another, of the Italian cinquecento, without making any further demand on human powers of belief than that a picture is made to talk. I have also introduced a very pretty suburb, Coombe, as the residence of the earliest Victorian aunt, to my thinking, that my pen is responsible for. I like this way of shifting the responsibility off my own shoulders.

However, it is fair to admit that the expedient of making the photographic copy talk, as well as the original, may outrage the sense of probability of some of my more matter-of-fact readers. I shall be sorry, because modification in a second edition will be difficult, if not impossible.

If I do not succeed in pleasing both sections of my Public, I am at least certain of the approval of a very large number of readers who have found my previous productions too long. The foregoing is even less than the 100,000 words which seem to recommend themselves as the right length, *per se*, for a net volume. A slump from a quarter to a twentieth of a million words mark a powerful self-restraint on the part of my "*cacoethes scribendi*"—an essay towards conformity which seems to me to deserve recognition. I do not understand that anyone has, so far, propounded the doctrine that a story cannot be too short. If that were so the author would save himself a world of trouble by emulating the example of the unknown author of the shortest work of its kind on record—the biography of St. James the Less. But perhaps I am mistaken in supposing that Jackaminory and the Apostle were one and the same personage.

I am personally more interested in the length of reviews than of