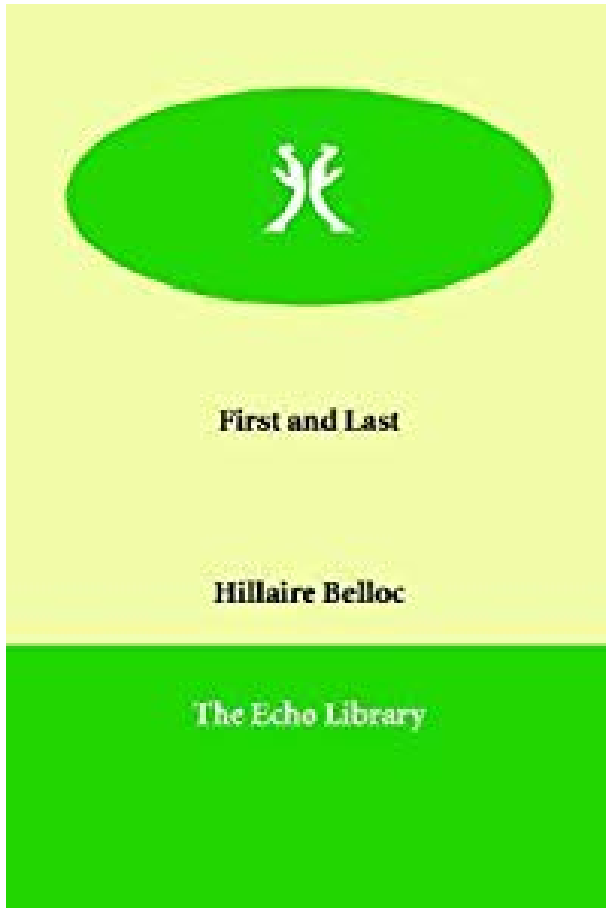


First and Last



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Author:	Hilaire Belloc
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From "The End of the World": One day I met a man who was sitting quite silent near Whitney, in the Thames Valley, in a very large, long, low inn that stands in those parts, or at least stood then, for whether it stands now or not depends upon the Fussites, whose business it is to Fuss, and in their Fussing to disturb mankind. He had nothing to say for himself at all, and he looked not gloomy but sad.

He was tall and thin, with high cheekbones. His face was the color of leather that has been some time in the weather, and he despised us altogether: he would not say a word to us, until one of the company said, rising from his meat and drink: "Very well, there's a thing we shall never know till the end of the world" (he was talking about some discussion or other which the young men had been holding together). "There's a thing we shall never know till the end of the world -- and about that nobody knows!" "You will pardon me," said the tall, thin, and elderly man with a face like leather that has been exposed to the weather, "I know about the End of the World, for I have been there." This was so interesting that we all sat down again to listen. "I wasn't talking of place, but of time," murmured the young man whom the stranger had answered.