

## *First and Last Things*

I suppose that is the real good in death, that they do stay; that it makes them immortal for us. Living they were mortal. But now they can never spoil themselves or be spoilt by change again. They have finished—for us indeed just as much as themselves. There they sit for ever, rounded off and bright and done. Beside these clear and certain memories I have of my dead, my impressions of the living are vague provisional things.

And since they are gone out of the world and become immortal memories in me, I feel no need to think of them as in some disembodied and incomprehensible elsewhere, changed and yet not done. I want actual immortality for those I love as little as I desire it for myself.

Indeed I dislike the idea that those I have loved are immortal in any real sense; it conjures up dim uncomfortable drifting phantoms, that have no kindred with the flesh and blood I knew. I would as soon think of them trailing after the tides up and down the Channel outside my window. Bob Stevenson for me is a presence utterly concrete, slouching, eager, quick-eyed, intimate and profound, carelessly dressed (at Sandgate he commonly wore a felt hat that belonged to his little son) and himself, himself, indissoluble matter and spirit, down to the heels of his boots. I cannot conceive of him as any but a concrete immortality. If he lives, he lives as I knew him and clothed as I knew him and with his unalterable voice, in a heaven of dædal flowers or a hell of ineffectual flame;