

**THE EBB TIDE: A  
TRIO & QUARTETTE**

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The Ebb Tide: A Trio & Quartette by Robert Louis Stevenson & Lloyd Osbourne

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**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON & LLOYD OSBOURNE**

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TRIO & QUARTETTE**



## THE EBB TIDE

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A TRIO & QUARTETTE

BY  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
&  
LLOYD OSBOURNE

"THERE IS A TIDE  
IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN."



CHICAGO  
STONE & KIMBALL  
M DCCCXC IV

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# The Ebb Tide.

## A TRIO AND QUARTETTE.

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### PART I.—THE TRIO.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### NIGHT ON THE BEACH.

THROUGHOUT the island world of the Pacific, scattered men of many European races and from almost every grade of society carry activity and disseminate disease. Some prosper, some vegetate. Some have mounted the steps of thrones and owned islands and navies. Others, again, must marry for a livelihood; a strapping, merry, chocolate-colored dame supports them in sheer idleness; and dressed like natives, but still retaining some foreign element of gait or attitude, still perhaps with some relic (such as a single eye-glass) of the officer and gentleman, they sprawl in palm-leaf verandas, and entertain an island audience with memoirs of the music-hall. And there are still others,

less pliable, less capable, less fortunate, perhaps less base, who continue, even in these isles of plenty, to lack bread.

At the far end of the town of Papeete, three such men were seated on the beach, under a *purao* tree.

It was late. Long ago the band had broken up and marched musically home, a motley troop of men and women, merchant clerks and navy officers dancing in its wake, arms about waist and crowned with garlands. Long ago darkness and silence had gone from house to house about the tiny pagan city. Only the street lamps shone on, making a glow-worm halo in the umbrageous alleys, or drawing a tremulous image on the waters of the port. A sound of snoring ran among the piles of lumber by the Government pier. It was wafted ashore from the graceful, clipper-bottomed schooners, where they lay moored close in like dinghies, and their crews were stretched upon the deck, under the open sky, or huddled in a rude tent amidst the disorder of merchandise.

But the men under the *purao* had no thought of sleep. The same temperature in England would have passed without remark in summer; but it was bitter cold for the South Seas. Inanimate nature knew it, and the bottle of cocoanut oil stood frozen in every bird-cage house about the island; and the men knew it, and shivered. They wore flimsy cotton clothes, the same they had sweated in by day and run the gantlet of the tropic showers; and to