

# For the Other Fellow.

BY ELMA VRONBERG.

*Illustrated by E. B. Vaughan.*

“DO you know where he is now?” Victor Clarkson looked steadily into the troubled eyes of the woman who asked the question.

“I don’t know for certain,” he answered slowly, “but I believe he went up north, to dig gum, probably.”

She clenched and unclenched her hands, and her lips set. “You professed to be his friend,” she said reproachfully, “Oh, why did you let him go?”

“Not even a friend can hold back a desperate man.”

“Then why didn’t you go, too?” she asked, with all a woman’s unreasonableness when stirred.

“A fellow can’t leave his mother and sisters to live on air,” he answered humbly.

“But you could have written.”

“Where to?”

“Oh, I don’t know!” she cried helplessly. “Oh, if only I—I——” she paused, and her eyes fell before his steady gaze.

“If only,” he began, with the bluntness of long friendship, “if only you had married the man who loved you, instead of—of——. Bah! what’s the use of talking, it’s done! But in any case, Head must be found!”

“He went north, you say,” she began eagerly, “to one of the gumfields? Oh, if only we knew something more definite! I’ll go myself! I’ll start this week!”

“Do you know what the gumfields of the north are like?” he asked grimly. “They are a dead man’s land, full of dead men who live! Sounds paradoxical, but it’s a fact! The shadow of a dead past hangs over them, and the place is one huge sepulchre! It’s hardly a fit hunting ground for a woman.”

She weighed his words, then she leaned

forward, a pleading light in her deep blue eyes, as she laid her hand on his arm. “Vic,” she said softly, “you cared for me once, will you go and bring him back for the sake of old times? You are free now.”

His face paled, and he trembled, but only for a moment, then he looked steadily at those eyes that never did, and never would, ask from him in vain. “Yes, I’ll go,” he answered.

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“Wallis ’Ead, did yer say? Yes, I knows ’im. ’E was in ther towenship last week, an’ ’e did look awful bad, an’ ’e carted back a rare old dose with ’im. I wouldn’t bet agen it that ’e were dead by now, fer wen ’e went on ther bust ’e jest knocked up fer weeks, an’ it warn’t no good goin’ near ’im. Yes, that’s ther road, Mister, straight a’ead, third track to ther left, past a bit o’ bush, an’ on up ther rise, an’ yer can’t miss ’is shanty. Don’t mention it! Mawuin’, sir!”

Vic. Clarkson found the road a track, and the track an occasional impress of a human foot, but his set face was unmoved by the deficiencies of the way, and his thoughts were concerned with deeper matters than the lonely track.

Had he really been hoping to hear that his one-time friend was dead? Was he thinking too much of the woman who trusted in his search? Was he pitting his chances against those of the broken down man he now expected to find? He tried to shake off such thoughts, and quickened his pace through the clump of bush to which he had been directed.

When through it, he paused, and, shading his eyes from the blazing sunlight, looked along the narrow clay path in front