

**ABEL HOLT, AND  
OTHER POEMS**

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Abel Holt, and Other Poems by George Auster

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**GEORGE AUSTER**

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Abel Holt

AND OTHER POEMS.



# ABEL HOLT

And other Poems.

BY

GEORGE AUSTER.



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BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT.

1868.

720





## ABEL HOLT.

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LEFT in the city streets—outside the gates  
Of that great nursery the State provides  
For helpless babes, whom want or shame have thrust  
Out of their mother's arms—laid at the gates,  
A bundle, with a week-old life inside ;  
And for all sign or trace of parentage,  
A slip of paper, with a name written  
Upon it, " Abel Holt ;" how should he know  
Love? Rocked by a hireling, fed, nursed, tended  
By strange hands, to whom no neighbourhood of kin  
Had brought the quick warm touch that nourishes  
The tender instincts of the new-born life ;  
No fondling voice to soothe his infant wail,  
No cheek to meet his cheek, when full of sleep  
The little head sank down, and the poor babe

Shut his meek eyes upon the bitter years  
That waited till he should have set his seal  
Upon them; bred in a crowd of outcasts  
Like himself; trained in a troop, when hardly  
His tiny limbs, unaided, could answer  
To their office; made oftentimes to feel  
How void his claim upon the charity  
That, like a step-mother, by duty moved,  
Grim, loveless duty, offered to a child,  
Supplied his needful wants, and in hard tones,  
Enough to dry the sap out of the dole,  
Bade to be thankful!—how should he know love?

A little silent child, pushed to the wall  
By rough companions, all too early learned  
In the world's art of shifting for themselves;  
Praised only that he crept away and gave  
Small trouble, and so crept away the more,  
Wondering in himself at all he saw.  
First at the rows of windows, so high up,  
In at whose tops, upon a summer day,  
The little woolly clouds would almost come,  
But never quite; only the distant hum,  
That like his own life, waiting for him, called

With dim appeal from the great world outside,  
Where he would go, when he was big enough,  
They said, to earn his bread. Then at the tall  
Robed clergyman, aloft in vacant space,  
Before the ranks of vexed and fractious spirits,  
Who proved most irksome toil the weckly rest  
Imposed. Somewhat he caught, in growing years,  
Of "universal love," and "brotherhood,"  
From Sunday sermon, but the words were lost,  
From fault of faint reflection that their image,  
Pressed on his heart, found in the life around.

Some things he liked—a woman's kindly smile,  
Or cheery nod of well-fed guardian,  
Rosy and sleek with after-dinner sleep;  
Feeling a pleasant property withal  
In the small waifs his golden hook had helped  
To fish up, here and there, from the great sea  
Where breeds prolific vice and misery.  
But when the great gates shut him out one day,  
And he must put his hands daily to serve  
For bread and clothing one, who in his turn  
Gave all his hours, from morning until night,  
To *serve another*, but for little more—