

PETER RUGG, THE MISSING MAN

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Peter Rugg, The Missing Man by William Austin

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WILLIAM AUSTIN

**PETER RUGG, THE
MISSING MAN**

PETER RUGG,
The Missing Man.

By WILLIAM AUSTIN.

—
With a Notice of the Author.
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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



WORCESTER :
FRANKLIN P. RICE, *Publisher.*
MDCCLXXXII.



WILLIAM AUSTIN.

THE AUTHOR of *Peter Rugg* was born in Charlestown, Mass., March 2, 1778. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1798. In 1801 he delivered at Charlestown, an oration on the anniversary of the Battle of Bunker's Hill, which was printed. He passed two or three years abroad, and published in 1804 his *Letters from London*. "The letters are written with ease and elegance, and show a sprightly inquisitive mind, with a strong flavor of what was called in that day 'Jacobinism,' in its judgments of affairs of church and state."

In 1805, in consequence of a misunderstanding growing out of a political contest, Austin engaged in a duel with James H. Elliott and was slightly wounded. The affair took place in Rhode Island, and Austin's second was Charles Pinckney Sumner, father of Charles Sumner.

In 1807, he published a volume in the Unitarian interest, entitled, *An Essay on the Human Character of Jesus Christ*. A Democrat in politics, it is somewhat remarkable that he should have identified himself with the religion of the other party. Some years later he contributed to the first number of the *New England Magazine* a paper entitled, *The Late Joseph Natterstrom*. These productions exhibit his varied talents and fine qualities as a writer.

Perhaps the most remarkable production of Austin's pen is the story of *Peter Rugg, the Missing Man*. It was written for the *New England Galaxy*, and has been reprinted many times. "It was," says Buckingham, "read more than any other communication that has fallen within my knowledge. It is purely fictitious, and originated in the inventive genius of its author." It belongs to that class of tales which have a common origin in the ancient legend of *The Wandering Jew*. Austin adapted his version to the quaint superstition of the New England of long ago.

William Austin maintained for many years a high position at the bar of Suffolk and Middlesex. He died at Charlestown, June 27, 1841.



PETER RUGG.

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PETER RUGG,

The Missing Man.

FROM JONATHAN DUNWELL OF NEW YORK,

TO MR. HERMANN KRAUFF.

SIR,—Agreeable to my promise, I now relate to you all the particulars of the lost man and child, which I have been able to collect. It is entirely owing to the humane interest you seemed to take in the report, that I have pursued the inquiry to the following result.

You may remember that business called me to Boston in the summer of 1820. I sailed in the packet to Providence, and when I arrived there, I learned that every seat in the stage was engaged. I was thus obliged either to wait a few hours, or accept a seat with the driver, who civilly offered me that accommodation. Accordingly I took my seat by his side, and soon found him intelligent and communicative.

When we had travelled about ten miles, the horses suddenly threw their ears on their necks as flat as a hare's. Said the driver, "have you a surtout with you?" "No," said I, "why do you ask?" "You will want one soon," said he. "Do you observe the ears of all the horses?" "Yes, and was just about to ask the reason." "They see the storm breeder, and we shall see him soon." At this moment there was not a cloud visible in the firmament. Soon after a small speck appeared in the road. "There," said my companion, "comes the storm breeder; he always leaves a Scotch mist behind him. By many a wet jacket I do remember him. I suppose the poor fellow suffers much himself, much more than is known to the world." Presently a man with a child beside him, with a large black horse, and a weather-beaten chair, once built for a chaise body, passed in great haste, apparently at the rate of twelve miles an hour. He seemed to grasp the reins of his horse with firmness, and appeared to anticipate his speed. He seemed dejected, and looked anxiously at the passengers, particularly at the stage driver and myself. In a moment