THOMAS LORING, EDITOR.
W. STRINGER, ASSOCIATE EDITOR.

THE COMMERCIAL
is published every *Monday, Wednesday, and Friday*, at $5 per annum, payable, in all cases, in advance,
BY LORING & STRINGER,
Corner of Front and Market Streets,
WILMINGTON, N. C.

RATES OF ADVERTISING.

1 square, 1 insertion,	00 50	1 square, 2 months,	$1 00
do. 2 do.	75	do. 3 do.	5 00
do. 3 do.	1 00	do. 6 do.	8 00
do. 1 month,	2 00	do. 1 year,	12 00

Twelve lines or less make a square. If an advertisement exceeds twelve lines, the price will be in proportion.
All advertisements are payable at the time of their insertion.
Contracts with yearly advertisers, will be made on the most liberal terms.

THE COMMERCIAL.

PUBLISHED TRI-WEEKLY, BY LORING & STRINGER.

VOL. 1. WILMINGTON, MONDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 7, 1846. NO. 111.

THE MAD WOLF.

A TALE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY "SOLTAIRE."

In the month of October, 1833, I was on my return from a trapping tour on Green River, the Grand Colorado of the West, in company with three companions, one named Alexandre, a half breed, Verboncœur, a Frenchman, and an American, named Worthington. After a long day's tramp, we halted in a neck of timber, upon a tributary of the Colorado, immediately bordering upon a wide-spreading prairie; and, having here pitched our tent, and tied the animals, we started out to reconnoitre the neighborhood surrounding the camp-ground. The country we had been travelling over all day lay immediately in the path of the roving bands of *Arapaho* and *Crow* Indians, and the former tribes were the white man's inveterate foe. Caution, therefore, counselled us to examine the tracks imprinted around us before we resigned ourselves to security and repose. Having mounted a willow-covered ridge, near the encampment, I descended into a small valley on our right, and had not proceeded far before I descried smoke issuing from the covert. Carefully approaching the spot, I soon discovered a numerous war party encampment of Crows, and, as they were friendly to the company I belonged to, without hesitation, I entered the circle seated around the fire. All seized their weapons with a general exclamation of *"kow!"* when, informing them, in their own language, that I was *Little Wolf*—a name conferred upon me by an old chief of the tribe while I was sojourning at their village—they immediately remembered me, and all signs of hostility were stayed between us. After a friendly shake of hands, and a friendly smoke of the calumet, I obtained all the information I needed relative to the Arapahoes, and with pleasure learned that the war parties of the Crows had driven them far from the southern hunting grounds. The chief of the party, and a number of his braves, accompanied me a short distance on my return, and, when we parted, it was with mutual expressions of friendship. On arriving at my camp, I found my companions awaited my coming. Each reported his observations, and the information which I imparted was received with general satisfaction. It also confirmed their several reports, all declaring their search yielded no signs of hostile footsteps.

Every preparation was now made for a night of uninterrupted repose, and every thing promised the luxury. Our wearied march, with the unceasing watchfulness necessary for safety, had worn us down, until a night of unbroken sleep was looked forward to as the greatest boon circumstances could confer upon us. A foe would not approach us in the position we occupied, with our friends, the Crows, posted in such close proximity—they were nearly within hail—certainly within sound of our guns. A final examination was made of the *lariat* ropes which confined our animals, and then a short smoke—the trapper's greatest luxury—was indulged in; after which, spreading the buffalo robes, we dropped off into a slumber that needed no artificial aid to prolong its soundness.

How long we had lain in sleep I know not; but, all at once, with a suddenness which started repose into flight, I felt myself jerked from the robe on which I was resting. My first thought was that Indians had attacked, but the light of the fire disclosed my antagonist to be a *wolf*, which had seized and still held me fast by the left hand. I had no weapons within my reach, so, without hesitation, I struck him with my shut fist, and, delivering the blow upon his grinning muzzle with all my force, I broke his hold, but in doing so lacerated my thumb against his tusk. The whole was but the work of a moment. Alexandre, who lay nearest to me, aroused himself, and no sooner was I released from the infuriated beast, than it seized him by the cheek. He choked it off, when, by this time, Verboncœur and Worthington, having secured their knives, they rushed upon the animal. Each inflicted wounds upon him—but both were bitten. With a howl that curdled the hearer's blood, our assailant fled and disappeared in the darkness. This sudden and violent interruption to our slumbers was not endured with Christian meekness, nor commented on in those choice epithets which bespeak a delightful surprise.—On the contrary, we indulged in a few bitter expletives against this nocturnal visiter, and having thus in a measure appeased the wrath within us, we hastily bound up the wounds we had received, and once more forgot our dangers in the oblivion of sleep.

When morning broke, all sallied forth in different directions, filled with revengeful purpose against the wolf, believing that he would lurk in our neighborhood. But after an extended search, we were forced to forego the promised revenge and vent our anger in declarations of what we would have done if chance had only placed him within gun-shot. On my return I again encountered the Crow party, the chief of which informed me that a *mad wolf* had visited their camp the night previous. He had been driven off, however, before he had bitten any of their party. This intelligence chilled my blood with a horrid apprehension; and when he added that the animal fled in the direction of our camp, I felt assured he had been our fierce visiter. With gloomy foreboding of coming ill, I returned to my companions who were preparing for a start.

Every thing being in readiness we departed from the camping-ground, and holding our way down the valley, came upon the great Crow *trace*, where, discovering the tracks of a large party of white men, we followed it up, and fell in with a trapping party of the North American Fur Company.—From them I obtained some whiskey and and salt, which I applied to my wounds, and advising my companions to use the same precaution, I intimated that the animal that bit us might be rabid. They laughed at my fears; but after they had, as I thought, sufficiently amused themselves about my "womanish" dread of a wolf bite, I checked their mirth by imparting to them the intelligence I had gained from the Crows. Having, however, commenced amusing themselves at the expense of my fears, in a spirit of bravado they continued. I was awed by a presentiment of coming evil, and exhibited it, no doubt, in my countenance. Moreover, between dread of the wounds I had received, and chagrin at their ill-timed merriment, I was influenced to drink freely of the liquor. My stolid air of indifference, together with my continued libations, alarmed them, for I was habitually temperate as regarded drink—but the reverse in passion. An outburst of anger on my part would have been natural, and have amused them—but my troubled countenance, coupled with the quiet despair of my actions, made them uneasy, and they watched me with interest. The liquor first made keen my sensibilities, then imparted a reckless indifference, which was followed by the stupor of deep intoxication; and, wrapped in its attendant robe of oblivion, I forgot the previous night's encounter. The songs and adventures related around the camp-fire on that night were unheard by me—and both companies were prepared to separate in the morning before they aroused me from my deep sleep. All the painful feelings of intoxication awoke with me, and stupid and sick, I made my way to the halting-ground, and laved my head and body in its cool waters.—Here Worthington, one of my companions, separated from us and joined the other company. Bidding him and the party adieu, we turned our horses' heads, and again took up the line of march for the Laramie river. We were in a region where danger larked on every bush, and where the footsteps of human beings brought hostility almost as surely as the clouds betoken rain. Thus far through the whole season of trapping we had escaped unhurt, and were returning richly laden with spoils.

But while successfully avoiding the savage foe, a hidden one was at work in our midst, more terrible than the painted warriors of the western desert—more appalling in its promised fatality than the torturing knife of the ruthless red man. *Hydrophobia*, in all its horrid panoply of terrors, looked out from the eyes that surrounded me, and I thought the madness was reflected back from my own.

On the day we crossed *Cache-a-la-Poudre* river, a colt, on which we had strapped some light articles, betrayed symptoms of the malady, and for the first time we found out he had been bitten. Alexandre and Verboncœur had fastened their guns upon his back, to relieve themselves of the burthen while climbing the river banks, and now with dismay they observed him break loose from the mule to which he was tied, and with a yell of terror fly from the stream we had just crossed, the foam gathering around his mouth, indicating with certainty the cause of his frantic actions. The arms he bore away were necessary for our protection. I, therefore, started in pursuit—but the mad animal being lightly laden, soon left my jaded mule far behind and dashing over a ledge to our left, ere I reached the promontory he was entirely lost to view. Misfortune appeared to have thrown her mantle over us, and, to a dread of the disease which threatened us, was now added the loss of weapons. Continuing our course down the borders of the Laramie, which became frozen over by the continued cold weather, we approached the North Fork of the Platte, and, while in its immediate neighborhood, fancied we observed the colt quietly grazing in a plain before us. Leaving Alexandre, who complained of being ill, in the tent, Verboncœur and myself started in pursuit. A flicker of hope stole about our hearts that this might indeed be the runaway animal, free from hydrophobia, which had fled, startled by the close proximity of a beast of prey, or had been only stung to momentary madness by some venemous insect. As we neared the animal all hopes fled—distance and our ardent wishes had converted the hump of a buffalo into the resemblance of a pack, which on nearer approach resolved itself into its real character, and cast us back again into a state of despondency. At this moment a cry from my companion, who was pointing toward the camp, directed my attention thitherward, and the next moment I beheld our tent on fire, and the half-breed flourishing around his head a burning faggot.—We instantly turned our horses' heads and rode with all speed towards him—as we approached we started off the pack-mules with his brand, and when we reached the spot all our worst fears were confirmed—he was a howling maniac!

After a violent struggle, in which he inflicted severe blows upon us both, we succeeded in securing his arms, and having bound him upon a pallet of skins, we drove stakes into the frozen ground and there tied him.—While he raved and howled, all the savage in his nature made predominant by his malady, Verboncœur and myself sat weighed down with horrid dread, and were contemplating each other with fear. I fancied I held a wild expression in his eyes, and no doubt he observed the same in mine. Alexandre, in the mean time, recovered from his convulsion, and in tones of earnest supplication besought us to end his torture, by sending a bullet through his brain. His supplications but echoed the thoughts which were coursing through my mind—I was meditating suicide with all the coolness of a wretch whose cup of despair is full, and the tide of which but lingers on the brim. Another, and another convulsion followed the progress of the disease upon our poor Alexandre; in his terrible paroxysms he tore the strap loose from the cords, and with a howl began to rend it with his teeth; when he secured the limb he tried to seize his shoulder, this we prevented by placing a strap across his forehead, and fastening it on each side with stakes—he now bit his lips with fury and the blood and foam gathered about them in his agony, while the pupil of his dark eye shot fire, and the ball, which a few days previous was white as the snow upon the hills, assumed a hue as red as blood. All other dangers vanished before this one—the savage foe no longer inspired fear, indeed he would have been welcomed to a conflict which promised for us certain death. As the sun of that day of sorrow went down, the half breed's paroxysms became more violent; and seating ourselves beside his rude mountain couch, we watched him through the gloom of night. Morning at length dawned, and we were rejoiced that with its first blush the spirit of our comrade fled, leaving his tortured body to its long sleep.

Alexandre's knife had been carried off by the colt, with the guns, and the amount of arms between Verboncœur and myself was one rifle, two knives, and a pistol; of these my companion had but a knife as his share, and I felt selfishly glad, for he was an athletic man, who, armed, in madness, would slay in a moment; I therefore clutched the weapons I passed with an eager gripe, and watched my comrade's motions with painful vigilance. We could not bury Alexandre's body, the earth being so frozen it was impossible to dig it with knives, we therefore started down to the river, with the intention of cutting a hole through the ice and depositing it in the stream, out of reach of the wolves. Verboncœur first commenced cutting but had not succeeded in making a crevice before he snapped his knife-blade off about midway.—This accident, at any time while in the mountains, would have been looked upon as a great misfortune—in our situation it was viewed as a frightful calamity—a loss which rendered us weak and helpless in defence, and which it was impossible to replace; and yet, paradoxical as it may seem, while I grieved I rejoiced, for, while it diminished the number of our weapons, it robbed my companion of the only dangerous one he had left, and one I had looked upon with dread. I represented to him the necessity of carefully preserving the other knife, and he assented; we therefore concluded not to risk it in the ice; but folding up the remains of our dead companion in a buffalo robe left it upon the prairie without sepulture, with the winds alone to murmur his dirge. So perished the first victim of the *Mad Wolf*.

When we again started, my companion asked me for the pistol in my belt, and the knife in my sheath, which he argued would be a fair division of the weapons, and I had no good reason for refusing him, other than my fears, but I put him off with an excuse that I wished to place them in proper order before I resigned them. He smiled, and we journeyed on. After observing his countenance for some time, I began to grow reassured—it looked calm and undisturbed, and his step displayed a firmness and decision which I believed could only belong to health in body and mind. While thus growing in hope and confidence, and when on the very eve of yielding up a weapon to him, a wolf howled in our immediate neighborhood, and I could see him shudder, the muscles of his face contract, and his eye assume an unusual lustre, while a low groan broke from his heaving chest. I hugged the weapons in my possession with increased eagerness, and clung to them with a tenacity founded on absolute fear, for I conjectured, and rightly, that the seeds of the dread malady which carried off our half-breed companion were making themselves manifest in Verboncœur. In crossing a small branch which emptied into the Laramie, I again watched his features, and all the symptoms of hydrophobia burst forth in a paroxysm, unmistakable in its character. He instantly rushed upon me, when with the heavy barrel of my rifle I felled him senseless—my fears had made me a Hercules in strength—and then leaping upon his insensible body I bound him with a *lariat* rope so tightly that in vain he struggled for freedom. I sat down beside him with my teeth clenched, and listened unmoved to his ravings and prayers for death—he, like Alexandre, besought me to despatch him; but finding his supplications moved me not, he broke into horrid imprecations and threats, in which he swore that he would kill me—that he would tear me with his teeth, and, bound as he was, he rolled his body toward me. I held him down to the earth, and he again relapsed into dreadful convulsions. My despair had now no lower depth. I looked upon my remaining comrade and shared in his agony, for I expected that inevitable as fate