MY ESCAPE FROM A MADHOUSE

The [illegible] of a Man Who Was Chased by Bloodhounds Last Week in [illegible] State.---*TOLD BY THE MAN HIMSELF.*

The Horrible Experience of Howell Rees.

In this nineteenth century civilization of New York the bay of bloodhounds was heard the other night when a man with the crime was chased by a pack of dogs and a crowd of men; followed through the dreary hours of the night over mountains, into the blackness of forests, until, like a slave of the South, he took refuge in the bed of a stream and lay there through four exhausting hours while the baffled pursuers searched for him. The man had money and was nervous. Nothing else has been said that has been said.

Such was the horrible experience of Howell C. Rees, the young business man who, his own father and brother declare, is insane. Even now, because he was a brilliant man of great resources and successful financial operations, he is incarcerated in a Poughkeepsie sanitarium until such a time as the doctors will agree to let him go. Nothing more than an affidavit was necessary to take him out of the busy walks of his life and render him a charge to the law. Such is the law, but you wouldn't think it.

Is Howell Rees insane? His nearest friends say no, the alienists and his family say he is. But whatever his condition when he was arrested last Wednesday, his subsequent experiences were enough to have driven the strongest man to the verge if not into the dread gulf of insanity. It is like a melodrama, a story out of the yellow backs, this tale of his spiriting away from the city, the nights in a madhouse, the planning and the escape, the pursuit, the final arraignment in a court, where the judge expressed sorrow for the prisoner, but refused to give him back to the world again. It has not effected the iron nerve of Rees; it has shaken his friends. Rees talks of that horrible night in the woods and tells the story for the Sunday Journal with a calmness which is almost unnatural.

My Night with the Bloodhounds in Pursuit.

"IT was Wednesday, July 14, that I, Howell C. Rees, was arrested in this city at the instance of my father, William A. P. Rees, my brother, Llewellyn Rees, and a lawyer, Robert Goeller. All these were my business associates. The affidavit necessary for my arrest said that I was insane, and a dangerous man to be abroad. I was hurried away to a sanitarium kept by one I. Ferguson, at Central Valley, Orange County. When I arrived there four muscular attendants were assigned to watch me every moment. I am an athlete. The attendants feared me. Not less than four men could be expected to handle me. All evidence that homicidal mania which the affidavit had said was possible in my madness.

"If you were going about the ordinary affairs of your own life and a bunch of officers should suddenly arrest you, hurry you out of the city into a strange place, give you over into the hands of four burly men and have you locked in a barred house, what would be your emotions? Wouldn't you be strongly tempted to develop a homicidal mania of the most demonstrative sort? Probably you would, but I did not. I submitted as quietly as the natural anger of a man would permit, and went to the asylum. Once there, though, all the mental and physical activity of the man began to assert itself. I am not the type which submits tamely, and I fought; but that is later.

"I saw the interior of an asylum for the first time Wednesday night. I was stripped to my undershirt and put in a small room. There was always a guard over me. Never a moment was I without an eye on me. I talked rationally, even cheerfully, to my guards, but they, brutally obedient to orders, answered no. Not a word. And I protest. I had stood the indignity of the stripping and the watching because I knew that sooner or later my friends would begin to look for me, and when they found me legal process would release me.

"The first attempt was made on Friday by Lawyer Mayer. He came to the sanitarium, but was not permitted to see me. He informed Dr. Ferguson that he would have his friend and client released on habeas corpus proceedings. I, listening from an upstairs room, heard Dr. Ferguson say that his patient was not in a fit physical—mind you, not mental—condition to go into court, and that he would prevent any judge taking him out.

"Then I, noting the doctor's significant words, and fearful that my friends might not be able to produce me, made up my mind to escape from the asylum.

"My clothing had been taken from me and I had nothing but a nightdress, but the man whose mentality has made him thousands would find a means for that. I was without tools of any kind, but my genius would find them. A wire from a picture on the wall furnished my first bit of material. A knob wrenched from the bureau was brought into service. With my muscular hands I fashioned a key, and in some manner, which I need not now explain, I reached the front door of the asylum Friday night and tried the key. The wire was too pliable to turn the heavy lock, and the captive, discouraged but not cowed, went back to his room.

"I waited. Saturday the barroom gave me a stronger piece of copper wire. In the moments when I was not watched I fashioned another key. In my own mind I had formulated a plan. Saturday afternoon there came another call from the lawyer. Again he was told that his client was too ill to be seen. Then one of the doctors came to the guarded room. He brought with him two mysterious pellets. He insisted that the captive should take them. The captive, remembering the conversation of the day before, refused. The attendants seized him. He fought with all that giant strength. Finally the doctor said, 'the straitjacket.

"I tried subterfuge. I expressed a willingness to take the medicine. I took one pellet. The second pellet I palmed and dropped upon the floor, where I crushed it with my heel. The doctor thought his work had been done. It had been but half done. I grew ill, very ill, the kind of illness which weakens and unnervates, but I am strong, and the idea of escape burned within me.

"The guards watched me closely. I worked on the key in the flitting moments when they left me alone. Something made them suspect and they made a search of the room. I hid the key in the roof of my night dress. Not finding anything about the room they made a personal search and dug up the second key. Then the watch was made more vigilant than ever.

"But I never gave up. In my inspection of the place I found one window large enough for my body to slide through. It was in the bathroom. I was permitted to take a bath. I inspected the window. I had no clothing, but as I walked through the hall to the bathroom I saw clothing hanging in the rooms on each side of the long hall. I must secure some of that. There was an Apollinaris bottle in the bathroom. I hid it. It might have a use—in case—

"Late in the afternoon the telephone bell rang. One of the attendants went to answer it. A second one was momentarily called away. But one man was left with me. I asked to be permitted to take a bath. The lone man started with me. The man said a joking word about the key. 'You might find something better than a key in the room,' said I. The man left me and hurried back.

"I could hear him overturning the room. The captive was alone in the hallway. I dived into a vacant room and found a pair of shoes and trousers. I slipped them on. In another a bicyclist's coat and cap. I seized them. Then I slipped into the bathroom. I was ill from the pellet, but with giant strength I forced the window open and began to work myself through feet foremost. As I was half way through an attendant rushed in. I tore my way out with a mighty effort and dropped to the ground. I was upon a high terrace, and across there were the woods.

"Two attendants below the terrace saw me and shouted. I had the Apollinaris bottle. I ran straight toward them. They could not reach me for the height of the terrace—and then that bottle. The woods were less than a hundred yards away.

"When I dropped from the window upon the terrace, I saw the two attendants in the yard. I gripped the apollinaris bottle with a determination to brain the first one who attempted to stop me. The terrace is peculiarly built. They had to go clear around the house to get to me. They started and I made a dash for the cover of the woods. Once out of sight I took a good steady gait and ran, following paths sometimes, sometimes going through the brush. I cold hear them shouting behind me, but I am a strong man and a good runner, and I had no particular fear.

"Gradually I drew away from them until by and by I could no longer hear the shouts nor the crashing through the brush. Then I breathed easier, but I did not slacken my pace much. I knew the general trend of the Hudson River, and I took a straight course for it. Darkness came on, but I held my way steadfastly. I waded streams and climbed high hills. With the night came absolute silence in the woods, and I was at last alone. Toning my pace to a walk, I went on and on through the unfamiliar country, heading always toward the river.

"I thought then that I was all right, and had begun to hum a song as I plodded along until suddenly I heard the bay of a dog back behind me. I stopped and listened. There were one, two, three, cries from the brutes. I listened again. The cries were coming nearer. Then it flashed across me, 'they are following me with hounds,' trailing me like any beast of the forest, and I must flee from a deadlier thing than men, the hound which follows a trail and never tires.

"All the time the baying went on. I started running again. At every pause I could hear the 'wow, wow, wow,' of the pursuit. It grew so dark that I could scarcely see. Tearing through the bushes I came to a brook and plunged in waist deep before I could stop. An inspiration came to me. Dogs cannot trail in the water. I changed my course and followed the brook, going up stream and wading fast. That tires, tires more than brushing through undergrowth.

"By and by I wearied. Back behind I could hear the dogs. I dropped down in waist-deep water and lay there exhausted with nothing but my head above. I heard the dogs when they reached the stream. I heard them prowling about for half an hour. I knew they had lost the trail. There were no men with them; they were afraid to go where their dogs would lead. It must have been near 8 o'clock when I entered the brook. It was midnight when, in the stillness and desolation of the forest, I crept out of the water, took my bearings and again headed for the Hudson. The dogs had gone back, baffled in pt. I knew the men would not come after n.

"Then began a long, weary tramp. I never deviated from a direct course tow where I knew the Hudson must be. I drenched to the skin, but that was not bad in hot weather. My clothes were t in a dozen places and I was muddy fro head to toe, but so long as there were n hound moans behind me and no crashing of pursuit to urge me on I was content.

"I have always been a good walker. The miles of rugged way had no effect upo me. After a long while the daylight bega to peep. Then the sun came over the hill and almost with the coming of the sun saw the river, the point to which I ha been aiming. There was a town in th distance, and I made my way to it. It was Highland Falls. I found one man awake. He was the operator at the station. I to him I was in trouble and wanted to g across the river. He gave me the fifte cents fare. Across the river was the trai for Fishkill. I boarded it. On the train I told a man something of my difficulties and he gave me the twenty cents to pa my fare.

"Once at Fishkill I was all right. My friend Flanery keeps a hotel there. Flanery is a white man. I went straight to his place. When I walked in he thought I was a tramp, and when I spoke to him he was almost startled out of his wits. I asked him for a rig. I wanted to drive out to where Fox, my gas works superintendent, lived. Flanery had no rig left in his place, but he gave me money and I took the trolley car.

"When I got to Fox's home only his wife and another lady were at home. They screamed when I came up the path and spoke to them. I assured them that I was all right and wanted breakfast. I got that and a bath and some of Fox's clothes. Then I waited for Fox and my lawyer, and when they came we went to Poughkee together and Judge Barnard heard the ceedings."

A Strange Tale of the Law.

This is the strange, almost impossible story of a New York business man. Right in the midst of his operations he is arrested, taken before a judge, on the affidavits of reputable physicians, sent to an asylum and kept there in durance awful while his friends try every available means to release him without result.

It is a story of how he himself escaped from the dread place to give himself up to a court for a fair hearing, and of how, when he got into that court, he was sent back to a sanitarium to be watched for days until the doctors should swear that he was normal and fit to be a member of society. It is a strange tale, and it shows you what the law of the land may do with you, no matter what your condition in life, if two or three will but make affidavit as to your mental condition.

An Episode in the Case.

"If a period of rest is prescribed for me, may it please Your Honor, it ought to be the kind that I select myself, and not confinement in an asylum. I am notinsane.

"The signs of insanity may be hidden," said the Justice. "I would like this matter postponed until September 13. I want physicians here at this hospital (Hudson River State Hospital), which is carefully conducted, to see you from day to day for the next six weeks."

"During that interval, then, Judge," said Rees, "unless your report is made, I am still to rest under the obliquy of this horrible accusation. Until the physicians report I still am in the eyes of the world held under the accusation and a charge of insanity, which I insist is not properly founded."

The Man in the Gas

Rees took the best legal talent in Poughkeepsie with him. There was a hearing before Judge Barnard on the writ of habeas corpus. Not all the eloquence of the lawyers could release him, and the Judge, expressing sorrow for his predicament, sent him to another sanitarium, where he will be under the eye of physicians until the 13th of September. If by that time he has killed nobody and seems to be able, according to the physicians, to take care of himself and his business interests, he may go about his affairs. Until that time he is a prisoner, and all because of an affidavit which says he is insane. Curious that such a thing can be done to you in New York but there it is.

Howell C. Rees is a big man. He has big ideas. He is handsome, strong, athletic and cool-headed. Sometimes he is nervous; all strong men are. He is far and away the brightest member of the firm which he represented. He is a clubman, a man of the world.

He is, first of all, intelligent. He is clean-cut, aristocratic, neat and, in some senses, esthetic. He is what you would call a gentleman. He talks kindly to you; he makes you think he likes you. Altogether, he is the kind of man with whom you could spend a pleasant and profitable evening in any circle and feel that you had been glad to know him. He has cultivated a magnificent frame to its full worth, and he is courageous. He fears nothing in particular, and conducts himself so that the people of Fishkill, which has been the scene of his most recent business operations, swear by him.

"Then it flashed across me, 'they are following me with hounds,' trailing me like any beast of the forest, and I must flee from a deadlier thing than men, the hound which follows a trail and never tires."

From a description given by Howell Rees to the Journal artist.