RECENT MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

Reported by Dr. Mercier.

[The Editors request that members will oblige by sending full newspaper reports of all cases of interest as published by the local press at the time of the assizes.]

Rex v. *Pritchard.*

Charles Legg Pritchard, 24, painter, was indicted for sending to Sir Edward Bradford a letter threatening to kill and murder Francis Hanks. Hanks was a chief inspector in the service of the North Metropolitan Tramway Company. Prisoner had for some time past busied himself in watching the North Metropolitan Tramways, and had persuaded himself that there had been cruelty to the horses and overloading of the cars, and he had for some time been sending letters of complaint not only to the officers of the Company but to the police. On August 12th he wrote to Sir Edward Bradford to the effect that he had received no assistance from the police, and that in consequence of the violent behaviour of certain persons towards him, he had taken a revolver with him, and should not hesitate to use it. A police officer called upon the prisoner and cautioned him. On September 2nd the prisoner wrote another letter to Sir Edward Bradford in which he threatened to shoot Hanks. The prisoner was arrested upon a warrant and struggled violently with the police, trying to get his hand to his pocket, in which was found a loaded revolver. The police proved the facts, and declared that there was no foundation for the statement that there had been cruelty to the horses. Dr. Scott, medical officer to Holloway Gaol, was of opinion that the prisoner was of unsound mind at the time he wrote the letter, and that he did not know the nature or quality of his act, or that he was doing wrong; also that the prisoner was at present of unsound mind. Guilty, but insane.—Central Criminal Court, October 23rd, Mr. Justice Bigham.—*Times*, October 24th.

That the prisoner was insane there seems to be no doubt, but the interest of the case lies in the very unusual form that the insanity took. It seems to have been a case of paranoia, but the delusion of persecution was unique in this respect: that the persecution was directed, not against the person himself, but against the horses of the tramway company. So far as I am aware, no such case has been recorded before.

The terms in which Dr. Scott was allowed to give his evidence should be noted. In this and in the following cases he stated his opinion in the very terms which have often been prohibited, and attention is again drawn to the freedom with which the medical witnesses are now allowed to prove insanity in this way, and to the great latitude that is given them in courts of justice.

Rex v. *Holmes.*

Harriet Holmes, 46, married woman, was indicted for the murder of her two children. It was the common case of a woman in a fit of depression murdering her children. The facts being proved, Dr. Scott gave his opinion that the prisoner was of unsound mind at the time she killed the children so as not to be responsible for her actions. Guilty, but insane.—Central Criminal Court, October 23rd, Mr. Justice Bigham.—*Times*, October 24th.

Rex v. *Richardson.*

John Thomas Richardson, 41, salesman, was indicted for the murder of his son, æt. 2 years. Prisoner murdered the child by punishing him with excessive violence for some childish indiscretion. He struggled violently with the police on being arrested, and when charged he said: "Me kill the child! I love my baby. Wilful murder! you must be mad. I thought the baby had a nerve, so I bit it through the mouth and on the top of the head, and I thought it would do it good." The prisoner had been very strange in his manner some time previously. He was extremely fond of the child. Dr. Scott gave his opinion that the prisoner was

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