

VIOLATIONS OF MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES

The stampeding of a number of unhitched teams on Market street on Wednesday and the collision of a Southern Pacific train and a San Mateo electric car near Sunnyside yesterday morning were doubtless both due to the willful violation of well-known municipal ordinances. The city is provided with an ordinance which prohibits any one from leaving a horse standing in the street unhitched. The offense is made a misdemeanor and is punishable with a severe penalty. Still it is openly violated and even more frequently evaded by the employment of hitching appliances, which only aggravate the case in the event of anything stampeding the animals attached to them. An affrighted horse cannot be held by the weighted strap which is in common use, and once he gets under way the clatter of that inefficient hitching device on the pavement and the blows he receives from it on the legs and body have the effect of increasing his fright and flight. Probably some of the animals stampeded by a passing automobile on Market street Wednesday were hitched with a weighted strap and nothing more. If they were standing on the street without any pretense at hitching, all the worse. In that event the law was entirely ignored and some policeman patrolling the neighborhood in which the stampeded animals were standing neglected a very important duty.

The law of railroad crossings is quite plain and simple. The collision near Sunnyside was clearly among the class of avoidable accidents. Nothing short of sheer carelessness on the part of some one intrusted with the performance of a duty imposed by law was responsible for it. Ostensibly, the crossing was guarded by gates which ought to have closed automatically at the approach of the train which caused the wrecking of an electric car and the serious injury of a number of its passengers. But the gates were up, and the gatekeeper in charge of the crossing was doing nothing, although the train was due. The presence of a fog which obscured the track and deadened the sound of the approaching train ought to have prompted the exercise of unusual vigilance. It does not appear to have done so, and the crash came as the electric car attempted to pass with every evidence in sight of a clear right of way.

These street incidents of two successive days suggest the necessity of more effective measures being taken to compel individuals and corporations to respect plain laws which have been enacted for the protection of the lives of the people. The latter must be enforced whatever else may suffer.