

## INDIFFERENCE TO MUNICIPAL LAW.

The conductors and motormen employed on the San Mateo Electric Railroad represent that the guard gates erected at the Sunnyside crossing of the coast division of the Southern Pacific, where the collision occurred on Thursday morning, are seldom closed when fast trains are passing, and that it frequently happens that the gatekeeper does not close the guards until half of the passing train has crossed the electric railroad track. Strange to say, however, none of these motormen or conductors seems to have considered it to be his duty to report the gateman's dereliction until after a serious accident had occurred.

The circumstances surrounding this incident of local railroading concentrate public attention on the general indifference which prevails in this and other communities to local laws and regulations designed for the public safety. Indifference to the violation of the law regarding the custody and operation of the gates at the crossing where the collision occurred was directly responsible for the accident of Thursday morning. If the first or some subsequent infraction of the law had been reported doubtless it would have been stopped by the railroad officials, and Thursday's accident would have been avoided. But, like the policeman who daily sees horses standing unhitched and allows the violation of law to proceed unchecked, these electric railroad men were so accustomed to seeing the gates up at the Sunnyside crossing, when they ought to have been down, that they thought nothing of the matter until a serious accident jarred them.

This disregard of the municipal laws for the protection of the public should not prevail, but indifference on this point is a prevailing and characteristic American shortcoming. The "Chronicle" noted yesterday morning, for example, police indifference to the enforcement of the hitching ordinance, which was responsible for a midday stampede of unhitched teams on Market street on Wednesday, and yet, while this article is being written, an unhitched and unattended team of horses, standing at the corner of Third and Market streets, within two feet of an electric railway line, is visible from the windows of the "Chronicle" editorial rooms, and two policemen are in the immediate vicinity, looking at it unconcernedly. Who would be really responsible for the damage such a team might create if stampeded—the driver, who has neglected to comply with the hitching ordinance, or the two policemen who are neglecting to enforce its observance? If the necessity exists for the enactment of ordinances in the interest of the public safety, a corresponding necessity obviously exists for their enforcement. Following the usual custom in such cases, however, our neglected laws are liable to remain inoperative until some serious accident, like that of the Sunnyside collision, wakes us up to the realization of our indifference and to a consciousness that what happened ought to have been prevented.