

FALSE BEACONS LURE THEM ON

Miscreants Tamper With Block Signals on Grade North of Ocean View, on Coast Line.

William Reardon, who claims that he is but 15 years old, but who the railroad officials insist is nearer 25, was made the defendant yesterday in a warrant which was issued by Police Judge Conlan on complaint of Special Policeman M. Hennessey, who charges him with "feloniously and maliciously placing an obstruction on a steam railroad track."

Heretofore the officials of the Coast Division of the Southern Pacific Company have regarded the tampering with the block signal wires on the track between Third and Townsend streets and Ocean View as the mischievous work of boys who delighted in stopping heavy trains on the grade and watching the fury of the train crews as the flagman hustled back to protect the rear while the engineers spread sand on the rails and profanity through the air in their efforts to start their loads again.

Matters became rather serious on Thursday night, however, when a heavy freight was stopped in the block by the signal showing danger, and a fast passenger train coming up behind with the assurance of a "clear track" was unable to stop until its engine's pilot was nosing under the caboose platform. Then it was that Reardon, it is alleged, was caught in the act of connecting the wires together to "short-circuit" the block.

With him, it is alleged, was John Connolly, who gave Special Policeman Hennessey such a fight that Reardon escaped and Connolly alone was brought in to answer the charges of malicious mischief and resisting an officer. He is a boy, but it is claimed that Reardon is a man and that it was not boyish mischief but something more criminal which induced him to so endanger lives and property.

The wires are within easy reach, and when properly manipulated a train may be stopped within the block with a danger signal, while at the same time the signal which is supposed to protect the train's rear shows "safety," thus beckoning a following train on to its doom. The fact that the track protected by the block signal is on a steep grade increases the danger, and it only requires a "greasy" rail and a heavy fog to have this tampering result in a disaster that would bring mourning to many homes.