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August 4th, 1930

Mr. William Randolph Hearst,
137 Riverside Drive,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Hearst,-

I am sorry beyond words for things that have happened in your absence. As for the fire, the garbage should not have been burned during that extra bad hot north wind. The previous small fire right at the incinerator itself was due to an ember from the fire box falling onto some excelsior and packing the man was feeding into the fire. It set fire to the wood pile adjacent and was confined to it. This second fire may have been from a spark escaping the wire guard over the smoke stacks or may have been from sparks blown out the feed door while the tender's back was turned. We sent up entirely new grates, smoke stack guards and chimney irons in March and the incinerator was rebuilt shortly after that. It is practically new. The State fire warden and several others arrived Friday while I was there and said they had heard the fire was caused by a faulty incinerator. After inspecting it, they came back and said there was no ground for the report and that they could suggest no greater safe guards than taken.

The time I made the ruling of no fires anywhere for any reason on the Hill without your personal consent, was because of seeing one night the impossibility of watching what happened to sparks in a shift of wind, and the length of time it took to put out an ordinary rubbish fire.

A plowed and cultivated band all around the Hill top would be a safe guard, also clean banks along the roadsides. The clean orchards saved the ranch a much greater disaster, and the fact that the fire leaped over the road in a number of places was due to the rich dry oat growth edging them. The lower ranch foliage, chicken ranch, etc., was saved by a 4" fire line Mr. Rankin ran in just this month (July) from the ranch reservoir - and tanks. I had not taken it up with you, but the fire hazard seemed so great it was done.

The burned area is a desolate looking place, but on going over it from above carefully, it looks as though there was a great deal of life left in many of the trees. The tree men are on the job but advise against trimming or cutting away what appears dead until time shows how much the natural recuperation will be.

Your cable is just received and will start the work of selecting and boxing young oaks in quantity right away.

Yours very truly,

JM-M