CONVERSATION BETWEEN COLONEL SOLBERT AND 
DR. MURRAY BARTLETT CONCERNING MR. EASTMAN 
March 26, 1940

Colonel Solbert suggested that Dr. Bartlett discuss Mr. Eastman's general philosophy of life, saying that Dr. Bartlett was one of the very few qualified to make observations along that line. Dr. Bartlett replied: "The thing I feel very strongly explains not only his life, but his death: he was a classical Stoic -- not in the ordinary sense of the word. He was soaked in Epictetus. After his death, people said 'What a terrible thing!' It was perfectly natural. He had carried out exactly what Epictetus called a good death -- euthanasia. He had fulfilled all his obligations. No one was dependent upon him. He felt this, and preferred death to becoming a burden. He was perfectly consistent with his philosophy; there is no question about that."

Dr. Bartlett continued, saying "Also, if a man is a Stoic and particularly if he reads Epictetus every day, he has got to be religious. Epictetus's idea was: man's will was in line with God's will if the man is a righteous man. Mr. Eastman was not an atheist, but had a very definite idea of his duty to God and man...He was absolutely not an agnostic."

Dr. Bartlett then recalled Mr. Eastman's saying to him "The thing that I should say was the key-note throughout the whole idea of social ethics was what Epictetus says when he says 'Right and wrong are not mere names. Right and wrong are wrapped up in the nature of things and, if we do not understand that and follow what is right, we shall run into absolute failure.'" With Mr. Eastman, as with Epictetus, said Dr. Bartlett, right and wrong, wrapped up in
nature and in man's will, were just as fundamental as day and night.

Dr. Bartlett remarked that he used Mr. Eastman's very words in his first lecture on social ethics, and said "I think he was very consistent all through his life because he felt that everything that he had to do -- everything that came into his life by his own achievement -- did not primarily belong to him. It was a carrying out of the great principle that underlies the universe: we are all one great family. That is why he was so interested in the negro... he wanted particularly to help those who were not understood and were not recognized as members of the brotherhood of man."

Dr. Bartlett then recalled Mr. Eastman's speaking of the belief of Epictetus that the best and kindest thing to do was to quietly put to death people who were absolutely helpless. Mr. Eastman, Dr. Bartlett intimated, could talk to him about philosophy, whereas this was not the case with many of his friends. "He was a tremendous reader, well educated in the philosophy of history -- he did not care about dates, but the meaning of it... He knew Plato and Aristotle the way the ordinary man would know modern economics. But Epictetus particularly (and also Marcus Aurelius) he knew almost by heart."

Colonel Solbert then brought up the fact that Mr. Eastman was not given to helping individuals, unless the individual was able to help himself. Dr. Bartlett replied that this undoubtedly seemed the most merciful thing. "Life was something to be used -- for the purpose of God, which is the true purpose of man. It is the will that really counts. If the will is right, you are in line with God. ... Even before he had the leisure to study himself, George told me that there was and must be some purpose in the world -- and of course that is what other people call God."
Dr. Bartlett then said, "I feel very strongly that people
should realize that he was consistent, conscientious, and really
very religious -- in the sense of being particular about doing the
right thing... The consequence is that when it comes to his death
it is the most natural thing in the world. He said about Walter
Hubbell 'God keep me from being like him.' It was the most natural
thing for him to do what he did. 'My work is done; why wait?' He
did not realize just what effect that might have on other people
who looked up to him as a very brave soul. But that was his own busi-
ness..." His philosophy "really sheds a light on his death and makes
it, to me, rather heroic."

Dr. Bartlett told of his being in Cincinnati at the time
of Mr. Eastman's death. "It did not shock me at all," he said,
"because I understood. When I came back, people said 'Isn't it
awful!' I told George Norton and Dr. Rhees 'It is perfectly under-
standable to me. He was a disciple of Epictetus.'

"As far as money went, Epictetus said that what we have we
do not have for ourselves. It is our to use -- we must use it for
the carrying out of the whole idea of things, not just for our own
purposes." Mr. Eastman "had his will changed in some respects, I
think, just before his death. This too was perfectly consistent."

Colonel Selbert remarked that Mr. Eastman's conception of
duty was very high and that he expected only the best. To this
remark Dr. Bartlett replied with a story. "I said to George once:
'You go, in one way, a little further than Stoicism. You take the
Christian idea that when a man is good it profiteth him nothing.'
He answered 'I believe that.'"
Colonel Solbert asked Dr. Bartlett if he could give an explanation of Mr. Eastman's interest in music.

Dr. Bartlett replied, "That, as far as I know, was a very slow development, and I think it began really with our friendship. Every Sunday since, I think, about 1898, I dined with George and his mother. (Of course his relationship with his mother was something that was very wonderful. She dominated his life, and he used to tell me things that she told him.) Every Sunday, up to the time I was married (1903) I went there every Sunday afternoon. I have always been very fond of symphonic music. (My hobby now is studying phonographic records.) George had one of those aeolians that you had to pump. He had good records. In looking these over I found some that I liked very much. One was the Second Movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. He didn't play it very much himself. He thought the selection was the proper thing to have in the house, and somebody might want to play it. So every Sunday afternoon I would play these things. Much to my delight both George and his mother wanted me to do it. That is how it began as far as I can see. He didn't have much popular music. It was good music -- some waltzes of Strauss. He got the aeolian while I was there. Before that, as far as I can see, he realized that he liked good music and he wanted to like good music. He couldn't carry a tune himself. Anything I could say about music helped him. I would say 'This is a beautiful thing,' or 'Notice this horn.' I realized he wanted me to play every Sunday afternoon for one-half to an hour, before other people arrived. The next thing was, he wanted to build his house and he wanted to have an organ built in it. I said, 'That will be fine.' By that time he had heard that they were building real organs
with attachments."

"He had William Mead, I think, as architect. His house was designed after the Root house in Buffalo. Then he heard that Mr. Hammond had had an organ put in his house. So he asked me if I would go up with him and the organist at St. Paul's, Beecher Aldrich, to see this organ."

Colonel Solbert interrupted here to ask if Mr. Aldrich used to see much of Mr. Eastman. Dr. Bartlett answered "He did until Mr. Eastman wanted to get a regular organist. But the first development of the organ was with Beecher Aldrich. You see, Mrs. Eastman used to go to St. Paul's Church."

Dr. Bartlett now continued to tell of going with Mr. Eastman and Mr. Aldrich to see the organ. "Aldrich tried out the organ. Of course it sounded better when played by an organist. George was very much impressed with it, and made up his mind to have an organ built in his house."

According to Dr. Bartlett, Mr. Eastman was soon troubled with numerous people -- musicians of little talent, people with ideas as to how Mr. Eastman should spend his money to help music, etc. "People began to realize that here was a man who was interested in music and had a lot of money to spend... He stumbled along for about ten years and suddenly realized that he must not let other people tell him what to do... They often tried to 'put it over' on him. I remember one Christmas thinking that here was a man who was going to do something if he was led right. He was going the wrong way. When he began to ask people to come in to hear the organ, he had a male quartet -- nothing worse except two pianos! I gave him a book on chamber music for Christmas.... He was beginning to love music for
himself. It was more than a relaxation. It gave him real satisfaction. He once said 'I am not musical, but the more music I hear the more I like it.' There is the Stoic; the more you know the better you like it. Then he felt he wanted to educate people in music -- a very great idea for a man who began in that way. He wanted to build music into the lives of people."

Colonel Solbert: "Music meant a lot to him, then, and he wanted to bring it to others?"

Dr. Bartlett: "Yes. And he wanted to do this here in Rochester. You see, his first great benefits were not for Rochester. There was a special reason for this. He felt he owed a great debt to Massachusetts Institute of Technology because they had helped him in certain problems. He had certain problems to be worked out, and they were worked out by men from M.I.T. He felt he was paying back what he got. His idea throughout life was that if he got anything of great importance to him he must give it back."

Colonel Solbert: "He felt that he got much out of dental clinics..."

Dr. Bartlett: "I don't think he got any more personal satisfaction from them than from music. But he felt this: I remember George told me one time that he was much impressed with the fact that poor teeth were a great economic liability. He wanted to save children's teeth... I think he had much the same feeling about music, but added to that was the personal satisfaction...."

Dr. Bartlett remarked that Mr. Eastman first enjoyed good church music -- and the organ grew partly from that. "His taste came out by hearing music and by educating himself. Of course, after a time, he began to get in touch with good musicians -- people who knew
things, and gradually he got rid of these barnacles who attached
themselves to him."

Colonel Solbert: "What kind of music did he prefer after
he got under way?"

Dr. Bartlett: "I would say he preferred music which is
represented by the slow movements of the great symphonies. Most
people start this way. For example, the Second Movement of Beethoven's
Fifth and Dvorjak's Largo in the New World Symphony. I believe those
Sunday afternoons got him in the habit of using Sunday as a day for
music. It seems a natural development. My idea was that chamber
music was the thing for the house -- not the organ. He gradually saw
this -- that the proper thing for the house was the string quartet.
Once in a while he would have a piano quintet... and later on some
wood wind. Finally he had one of the great string quartets of the
country. He realized he had a house, not an auditorium. The organ
was not used much then. Gleason played the organ for breakfast;
I think Fisher started this." Dr. Bartlett told of Mr. Eastman's
liking to start the day with music. He suggested that it probably
began quite accidentally. "Perhaps Fisher came early one morning and
played on the organ and Mr. Eastman discovered he enjoyed it."

Colonel Solbert: "How about books? How much did he read
and what sort of books?"

Dr. Bartlett: "His reading, as far as I know, was what
you might call serious reading. He read biographies, and was interested
in history from a biographical standpoint... He got every important
serious book that came out and read parts of everything. But he later
on became very much interested in social ethics and philosophy. He
was one of the best read men I knew. When I spoke about a book, generally he had it. He spent his leisure time at home in reading. He was not a novel reader. I never heard him speak of a detective story. His books were serious but what he liked -- history, social science, and, as I say, he had a very deep appreciation of philosophy, particularly of Epictetus. I don't know whether he had anybody pick out the news articles which he ought to read but I have an idea he probably had somebody down here give him an idea of what he ought to read. Other people naturally think of him as very scientific with a very scientific mind, interested in the practical application of science. From my own friendship with him, I would say that he was more interested in knowing the reason for things, more interested in getting the right outlook on life and its human relationships. In my contacts with him I would say that he was more interested in finding out what the best human relationships are.

Of course, he was also interested in science. But I don't think that was what interested him most." Dr. Bartlett suggested that Mr. Eastman's interest in the best way to enter into human relationships was shown "in the way he handled the personal side of business, and in how he handled his money he made from it."

Colonel Solbert: "How did he become interested in painting?"

Dr. Bartlett: "The first painting I remember in his home was an awful German thing called 'The Fairy Tale.' He liked good pictures, and went to good advisers, although he got 'stung' on some pictures. He made more of a short-cut here than in music. By that time he knew he had to go to experts for the best. He always wanted the best, and that came from his mother. (When she was a widow she took in boarders. She had clean napkins every meal and
a clean tablecloth every day."

Colonel Solbert commented upon the strength of the motive drive which was based in Mr. Eastman's devotion to his mother and his desire to give her everything. He then asked Dr. Bartlett what else in this relationship appealed to him.

Dr. Bartlett: "I think the great thing was: she was a lady right through. Her social instinct was always perfect. That made him a gentleman. Whatever he was, he was a gentleman. He was a gentleman from the start because of the social instincts of his mother. I remember going to a funeral in Waterville, and there were two names in the town that stood out. One was Kilbourne -- his mother's name. She refined his manners and his taste and principles as well. She told me one day after they were in their first house on East Avenue how nice everything was and how nice the people were living on East Avenue, and that they all came to see her. She said 'I told George he wants to be very happy about his new friends, but he must not forget his old friends.' He didn't, you know, and neither did she."

Colonel Solbert: "What was her outstanding characteristic?"

Dr. Bartlett: "Her outstanding characteristic was the same sturdiness of character that really was the foundation of George's Stoicism. Nothing ever daunted her. She kept her ideals. When she went to East Avenue, she went in there as if she had always lived there. I never heard her give the slightest indication that George had crossed her or that she had disagreed with George in any way. I think that she felt always that he had carried out his ideas. It was really a wonderful relationship. I went to Mexico with them -- there were six of us. I never saw such devotion as there was between George and his mother.
He thought of her first right along; the rest of us just came afterwards."

Colonel Solbert: "She was a great person. A study of George Eastman must begin with a study of Mrs. Eastman."

Dr. Bartlett: "I think I was pretty close to her. I recall her patience and calmness under suffering -- and she did suffer with a broken hip. She was about 86 when she died; she was in the new house about four or five years. She died about 1904-05. I was married in 1903 and she was living then. She always reminded me of Whistler's Mother. She had all George's philanthropic tendencies. She did a lot nobody ever knew about, and gave to many individuals. He did not know about this. She was very keen; you couldn't put anything over on her."

Colonel Solbert: "Who were his friends?"

Dr. Bartlett: "Bert Fenn was a great friend. (Mrs. Woodbury is a sister of Mrs. Fenn.) Bert was a peculiar chap -- not very popular with many people, but he had a heart of gold. George loved Fenn. They were very good friends right from the start. Fenn believed in George from the beginning. He talked to some important people at that time -- Mr. Rundel and Mr. Strong. I was very fond of Bert. He was very much of a rough diamond; was a perfectly splendid chap. He was a little vain and a great dresser. That of course makes some people think 'How did Bert Fenn get where he is?' He was very fond of George and George of him."

"We were on a fishing trip in 1900 up to Nepigon (Bert Fenn, George Eastman, Fred Church, the patent lawyer, and myself). I think Fenn was then one of his most intimate friends. I wonder how intimate they would have been later on. Eastman developed his cultural life. Fenn developed outside things. He was very valuable in a business way."
Dr. Bartlett then remarked on the fact that Mr. Rundel was always present at the Eastman home on Sunday afternoons. "Mr. Rundel used to come Sundays about 4:00 o'clock and would never say anything. But he was one of the old friends. I cannot remember anything that Rundel ever said... Mr. and Mrs. Hubbell did not come every Sunday. George had a great respect for Mrs. Hubbell and a great deal of confidence in Walter Hubbell."

Colonel Solbert: "Can you think of any stories or incidents that support your ideas concerning Mr. Eastman?"

Dr. Bartlett: "He didn't tell stories much, but liked to listen. He liked to play practical jokes on people. I remember one joke that George thought was grand. We were up on Nepigon about a week. We had had rough going in some ways -- getting up early in the morning and going to bed late. Fenn and Church did not shave every day. On Sunday I went off fishing alone. When I got back I found a party of gentlemen and ladies that had come up the river, and they were all dressed up. I looked like the devil -- ten days' growth of beard. They thought it was the best joke. George and Fenn got great fun out of it, and took a picture of it. Fenn wrote 'Who's the tramp?' George liked it too. He used to show people the picture. I remember he chuckled most of the time; he rarely laughed."

Colonel Solbert: "He was a great character -- so simple! Simplicity was the key-note."

Dr. Bartlett: "He was a great soul. He got the best out of life. He missed a home and family. But you see his mother took all that for the greater part of his life. But outside of that he gained the real goal in life."
Dr. Bartlett continued "Every man has his prejudices. George had some, but they were so small compared with his general outlook that no one thought much about them."

Colonel Solbert: "He was so simple and straightforward. 'If a thing is right, we must do it.'"

Dr. Bartlett: "George was a Coolidge with a brain."

Colonel Solbert: "He never beat around the bush; he wanted to know the facts. He had a higher motive in almost everything."

Dr. Bartlett: "Epictetus explains the whole thing. He went right to the spot with George. I never heard him be quite so definite on his own satisfaction with Epictetus's philosophy as he was in the last twenty years. (From the time I came to Geneva.)"

Colonel Solbert: "I wonder who gave him the books on Epictetus."

Dr. Bartlett: "He probably got them himself. He read a great deal of philosophy. He read Will Durant's Story of Philosophy. From about 1920 I think he had more leisure and he really found Epictetus and Epictetus found him. He found a real basis for his philosophy. He would say to me 'As Epictetus says,' and I knew he was finding a practical basis for what he had believed all his life. This jibes in exactly with his death. We didn't talk religion much but he did have a very strong belief that there was a directing mind and purpose in the universe, and if you found out what nature was you got an idea of what the destiny of man would be. Nature and man were one. That is Stoicism."

"He was a successful man from the time I knew him. The struggles and dangers were nearly over. It was about the time he was
organizing Kodak Limited. I met him in 1898. I went abroad and he happened to be abroad at the same time organizing Kodak Limited, and that is where I met Mr. and Mrs. Dickman. She had a great deal of influence over him."

Colonel Solbert: "Did they have any children?"

Dr. Bartlett: "No. Mr. Dickman I did not know very well. He was a very attractive man and had a very pleasant personality. He laid the groundwork in England for Kodak Limited."

Colonel Solbert: "How about Mr. Walker?"

Dr. Bartlett: "He was an Englishman. Mr. Dickman was the connection. It was an English company for a while. I also met Lord Calvin when he came over. George and his mother were very proud of Lord Calvin. He was a good scientist and a delightful human being. One story shows something about Mrs. Eastman that most people would not know. They gave a dinner for the Calvins, and Lord Calvin came in the regalia of the Victorian Order. Mrs. Eastman asked him to do it, he told me. She wanted to see it, and wanted other people to see it. Lord Calvin said to me 'Mrs. Eastman wanted me to do it. I can understand the success of her son.' It meant a great deal to a girl brought up on a farm in Waterville."

Colonel Solbert: "George Washington Eastman (George's father) started the Eastman Commercial College?"

Dr. Bartlett: "I just happen in a way to be connected with that. I was born in Poughkeepsie. That is where Harvey Eastman started the Eastman School. He was a brother of George's father. Harvey was a world-beater at the time. He was mayor of Poughkeepsie; he gave Eastman Park to Poughkeepsie; he got the first railroad bridge"
there. He was the big man in Poughkeepsie. This was George
Washington Eastman's brother -- George's uncle."

Colonel Solbert: "I saw a photo mural the other day of a
big classical building called 'Eastman Commercial College.'"

Dr. Bartlett: "There were three brothers -- one in
Poughkeepsie, one in Chicago. George's father had the least busi-
ness ability but had the finest character of the lot. Harvey was
something of a crook. George's father died when George was a
little boy. Mrs. Eastman told me he was a good man and a gentle-
man in nature."

Colonel Solbert: "I wish there were someone alive who
went to school with him."

Dr. Bartlett: "I don't think there is anyone. Those of
his own age are all gone. I was still pretty young -- was only 26 --
when I came here. They were all older men who went with him. Fenn
was about George's age. Hubbell was older. Francis Macomber came
in later."

Colonel Solbert: "Was there anyone else at that time?"

Dr. Bartlett: "Of course George Norton knew him at the
last. Lillian was a very sweet lovely character. I think George's
women friends were very important in his life."

Colonel Solbert: "Who were they?"

Dr. Bartlett: "Mrs. Dickman, Mrs. Frank Ellwood (Victoria
Powers) whose father was a very intimate friend of George's, Mrs.
nulligan, Miss Whitney (went with him to Europe). Mrs. Mulligan
helped him much in musical things. They disagreed very definitely
on certain things. George was beginning to know himself."
Colonel Solbert and Dr. Bartlett now discussed the choice of a biographer for Mr. Eastman. Colonel Solbert stressed the need for a writer with "a sympathetic pen." Dr. Bartlett remarked that he believed George Eastman appealed to the French. Among the writers mentioned as possibilities were Maurois, Julian Street, Harold Nicolson, Sedgwick, Burton Hendrick, Marquand, James, and Van Deusen.