Interview with Miss Marie Cherbuliez, 61 Dorchester Road

Although Mr. Eastman had a remarkably good memory in business matters, Miss Cherbuliez found, very early in her association with him, that it sometimes might slip in dealing with other matters. When she came to Rochester, on February 1, 1914, to join Mr. Eastman's household as its manager, she found herself, a perfect stranger, alone at the station in the cold and storm—although Mr. Eastman had definitely promised that someone would meet her. It was a long time before she brought this matter to his attention and, after he had apologized, he gave what may be an explanation of how he had taken the fine edge off his memory for some matters. He told her that when he was a young boy, hardly out of school, he used to go down to Scranton's lending library and skim through the popular Oliver Optic books for boys. He would read many of these books each week, so rapidly that he could scarcely remember details of a story after he had read it. However this may be, Miss Cherbuliez found that in his last three years when he read detective stories as rapidly as he had Optic books in his boyhood, he at least remembered titles. She might ask if he had read a certain one and pass it on to him, but if he had gone through it before he would promptly recognize it and reject it.

Mr. Eastman did not originally inspire Miss Cherbuliez to any warmth of feeling but as the years passed, and particularly as he mellowed in the last five to eight years, she grew to have
a most sincere affection for him. She found that he tested everyone
whom he placed in a responsible position and he did not give his
trust readily. Once a person gained his confidence, Mr. Eastman
was that person's friend for life.

Mr. Eastman's mother died shortly before Miss Cherbuliez came,
and one time he said "I am sorry that you weren't able to meet my
mother. You would have liked her, I know. She was a very wonderful
woman." The experience of his mother when she fell and broke her
hip in the old Sewell house, three or four years before they moved
into the new house, affected Mr. Eastman greatly. His mother needed
the constant attention of a nurse in her last years, when she moved
about only in a wheel-chair. He later grew to dislike the sight
of a wheel-chair because it reminded him of his mother's suffering.
Like her son, Mrs. Eastman had great patience under severe difficul-
ties. She had great religious faith, and while he did not have this,
he had faith in the essential goodness of humanity. Mr. Eastman
kept three or four photographs of his mother in his sitting room
but none of his father. The senior Eastman died in 1860, before
photography became a popular art (thanks to George Eastman) and most
persons did not often "have their picture taken." Because of this
fact, it is not strange that Mr. Eastman had so few photographs of
his father.

Before Miss Cherbuliez became Mr. Eastman's housekeeper,

she went to New York City to interview her with regard to taking

the position. She did not want to live in the house of an unmarried

man without knowing something of his personality and character, so she

wanted to meet him and she passed on this wish through Mrs. Dickman,
who was wife of the director of Kodak, Ltd. of London, and was a mutual acquaintance who had drawn her to Mr. Eastman's attention. Mr. Eastman and Miss Cherbuliez talked together and, as she wanted to think it over, he asked her to see him again. After the second meeting she was still undecided, but before he left New York Mr. Eastman called her on the telephone and asked if she had made her decision. "No," she said. "It's a long way, and I would be among strangers." Mr. Eastman replied "Well, Miss Cherbuliez, think it over, and if you decide to come I will be very happy to have you become a member of my household." She promptly replied "I'll come!" but you will have to give me two weeks to get ready." He consented and asked her if she wanted a contract and she said it would be better not to have one as, possibly, they might not agree as well as they hoped to. Miss Cherbuliez says she came to the sudden decision to work for Mr. Eastman by the persuasive and reasonable tone of his telephone conversation. The talk ended when Mr. Eastman said "My secretary will confirm this by letter and when you are ready to come I will advise you of the best trains, and will have you met." (He forgot to have someone meet her!)

Miss Cherbuliez was asked if she could recall Mr. Eastman saying anything about his boyhood. She replied that, apparently, he never had a dog, or a pet, or never whistled to amuse himself then. For her part, she liked to whistle. One morning early in her service with Mr. Eastman, she came downstairs whistling merrily and did not notice him until she almost ran into him at the base of the stairs. "Was that you whistling?" he queried. "Yes", Miss Cherbuliez admitted. "I don't like whistling in my house" he ad-
vised her. Miss Cherbuliez answered "I'm sorry, Mr. Eastman, I'm a great whistler." She expected he would tell her to pack her trunks, but he didn't. After that, she did not whistle so much that she annoyed him. On the other hand, she didn't cater to him in this or other of his foibles.

Mr. Eastman, when he was mildly annoyed, would say nothing. When he was very pleased at something, his usual method of laughing was to jerk back his head and utter a brief "Ha!" She had been warned by Mrs. Dickman that he would not say "please" or "thank you" but that if he didn't complain she would know that he was satisfied. She found that this prediction was verified by her experience.

As you must imagine, in his allowance for house expenses and rent Mr. Eastman gave Miss Cherbuliez a weekly sum, the amount of which he felt, in the case of anything supplied for his meals was satisfactory, expenses, and never stinted her. He must have been satisfied with the results she achieved for he once said "I've been blessed by having two such women with me as Miss Whitney and Miss Cherbuliez." She kept double-entry books (which were audited by public accountants each year) and each week she paid the forty employees in Mr. Eastman's establishment. (The yearly upkeep cost of Mr. Eastman's home was about $40,000.)

During the World War period, Mr. Eastman "did his bit", and was thoughtful of his employees. Through foresight, Miss Cherbuliez had stored four barrels of wheat flour and four barrels of sugar in the cellar. Mr. Eastman thought about this and said to her "We have no right to this flour and sugar when the men working on the outside don't have it." (People on the "inside" were fed by Mr. Eastman; and the greenhouse men, the chauffeurs and gardeners lived at home.) So the surplus food was sold to these people at cost. In the pat-
ric tic wartime effort to conserve coal, Mr. Eastman shut off several of his greenhouses which could not be heated from the house and saved several tons of coal a week in this manner.

The beautiful lawn at the side of the house was plowed up at that time and potatoes planted, which were sold for a nominal sum to the families of his house employees. Mr. Eastman asked Miss Cherbuliez if they should be given away, but she felt it might be better to charge a small price as the people were getting fair wages, so this was done. During wartime, Mr. Eastman sent to the men in the School of Aerial Photography, who were quartered at Eastman Kodak Company, a billiard table from his home. A second organ, made by the Aeolian Company, was placed in the former Billiard Room.

An instance of Mr. Eastman's humor comes from this wartime period. Miss Cherbuliez did nursing work for the Red Cross occasionally and one evening she told him of her experience with a family in Jay Street, which is a poor neighborhood. She told him that the five persons in this family--father, mother and three children--slept in two beds that were in such condition that they had to be tied together to keep them from falling apart. She said they took off only their shoes when they went to bed. Mr. Eastman's reply was unexpected, for he merely grinned and replied "That might be a sensible idea. Figure up how much time a person spends each week, each month, each year in dressing and undressing. Think of the time one would save if he didn't have to go through all these motions!"

Miss Cherbuliez told of Mr. Eastman's living habits at home. He was roused at seven o'clock every morning by Young, his butler, and would take a shower or bath and shave before he came downstairs.
He was always immaculately and fully dressed for the day when he came downstairs, right up to the close of his life. He never came downstairs in a lounging robe or slippers. Mr. Eastman never used the lift in his home but insisted that he walk upstairs and even towards the last, when Miss Cherbuliez anxiously insisted that he use the lift. Mr. Eastman usually retired late, from eleven o'clock on.

Miss Cherbuliez was asked for details of Mr. Eastman's habits in eating, and she described his breakfasts. He started with a half of the largest grapefruit that could be obtained. In winter, he had H.O. oatmeal covered with thick cream, that came from his own Jersey and Guernsey cows, but in summer he ate no cereal. Then he would have muffins—corn or bran or whatever might be prepared. Sometimes he would have toast, generously spread with his own home-churned butter. Frequently he would eat bacon, and sometimes a three-minute egg. He had no juices or prunes. He usually drank several cups of coffee with cream.

He always had guests for lunch at home on Saturday (on other days the butler took his noon meal to his office) Mr. Eastman would have soup, chicken, chops or steak, dessert and coffee. He never ate cake as a dessert for lunch, but he might have pie or pudding, jelly or something light. When he was lunching alone, he would enjoy a tart apple, perhaps a crisp Spitzenberg or McIntosh with salt on it.

He started dinner with soup. Then for the entree his favorite meat was rare porterhouse steak, very thick, vegetables and dessert. He often had a plain lettuce salad, with french dressing, and crackers and cheese. Sometimes he would have a slice of tomato on the lettuce, or a slice of Bermuda onion, or ate green onions from his garden. Before he went to bed, he would relish another half grapefruit.
In regard to his cultural enjoyments, before the days of radio, when Mr. Eastman came home from work, Miss Cherbuliez said, he would immediately start the electric Aeolian player-piano and listen to some of his music rolls. At the time (1914-18) that George Fisher was with him as organist, Mr. Eastman had a phonograph with operatic records beside the organ and Mr. Fisher would accompany the record singer on the organ. An organ favorite, which Mr. Fisher was often asked to play, was Sir Edward Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance."

Mr. Eastman was interested in pictures and he had a fine art collection when Miss Cherbuliez came with him in 1914. The Knoedler Art Galleries, of New York City, sent him word when they had something which they thought would interest him. If he were going to New York he would see the picture, otherwise it would be sent to his home and he would "live with it" for several months. His tastes were conservative and he owned no nudes but had landscapes, sea scenes, portraits of men and women in a wide range. Artists would often come from various parts of the country to see his fine art collection.

Mr. Eastman's house was a tower of flowers, all of which were obtained from his own garden. Two men came in from the greenhouse every morning and changed the flowers in three big vases in his sitting room and fresh flowers were put on the breakfast table. When Mr. Eastman had left his bedroom fresh flowers were placed there. In the Conservatory, where he ate his breakfast, there were tall palms standing in tubs. Every Friday fresh potted flowers were bunched in front of the organ in that room. Boxes of orchids would be sent to Mr. Eastman's friends during the season, and frequently he would send them boxes of cut flowers. When he was out of town, Miss Cherbuliez sent flowers twice a week to persons on a list he gave her.
One of the rarities among Mr. Eastman's flowers was a white orchid which cost several hundred dollars. It bore three flowers each year on its single stem, and had bloomed twice before he died. This plant was kept in the sitting room. Several other orchid plants were brought in when they bloomed. The white orchid was never cut.

Every year the head greenhouse man made up a list of bulbs that were wanted and, after Mr. Eastman had looked it over, Miss Whitney sent an order to Holland for more than 50,000 bulbs. This included tulips, hyacinths, jonquils, daffodils, paper-whites and others. Red was not his favorite color in flowers, although he had occasional red roses and carnations. At the reception for the Swedish royal party in 1926 there were 250 potted poinsettias in the house decorations.

With regard to the "human" side of Mr. Eastman, his warm friendliness was shown to Miss Cherbuliez a number of times. Once a male relative from out of town was coming to visit her and she wondered what hotel she should recommend. "The boss" suggested "Recommend the Eastman Hotel." She replied (as she was thinking of an establishment of that name on Chestnut Street in Rochester) "Oh, that isn't much of a place for a man like him!" Mr. Eastman chuckled at her natural assumption "No, I mean the Eastman "hotel" right here--my house." So Miss Cherbuliez' relative became a guest at a very fine "hotel" indeed.

At another time, Miss Cherbuliez told Mr. Eastman of someone very dear to her who was desperately ill in a New York hospital. With
great thoughtfulness, Mr. Eastman gave her a very old bottle of wine from his cellar and sent it to her friend. After the sick man had tasted it he told her "Only a prince of a fellow would give away a bottle of wine like that to a sick man he didn't even know."
End Interview with Marie M. Cherbuliez, 61 Dorchester Road

Miss Cherbuliez told of the great amount of detail in the keeping of Mr. Eastman's household records. Accounts were not lumped but were kept separately for house, barn, garage, greenhouse, garden--and heat, light and power. She made monthly reports of the milk produced by the five cows. Samuel McCleery, who had charge of the cows, weighed the milk and from his figures Miss Cherbuliez computed the amount in quarts and fractions of quarts. She had a large sheet for each cow's record. Butter was churned from the milk twice a week and she kept a record of the pounds of butter made. She recorded monthly the number of eggs laid by the one hundred chickens (Rhode Island Reds, Giant White Leghorns, and Brown Leghorns.) Mr. Eastman wanted his house managed as systematically as he managed Eastman Kodak Company and Miss Cherbuliez did the job in a businesslike way.

Mr. Eastman's extreme interest in detail was indicated by an experiment he made in his greenhouse in the early 'twenties. He planned to grow a dozen peach trees on an espalier (a trellis upon which a tree or shrub is trained.) Mr. Eastman brought Miss Cherbuliez a little blank book with the pages numbered 1 through 12. She asked "What is that for?" He replied "I want you to count the fruit that is fit to eat on each tree which matures." Miss Cherbuliez looked at him in amazement and answered "All right, but don't ask me to count the grapes on each bunch on each grapevine in the greenhouse!" Mr. Eastman realized the humor of the idea and his eyes twinkled as he replied "I may ask you to do that yet."
A business-like aspect was given Mr. Eastman's home by the house telephone system. A buzzer system connected the fourteen rooms of the house. For making connections, a button on the base of the telephone was used, the letters A through N designating the rooms. (Mr. Eastman's sitting-room connecting-button was marked "sitting-room."

Mr. Eastman made few outside calls to converse with his friends by telephone--so few, in fact that he didn't remember the numbers. When he wanted to make such a call, he usually asked Miss Cherbuliez, who had a good memory, for telephone numbers.

Miss Cherbuliez spoke of Mr. Eastman's ways of amusing himself at home. One of his activities was looking at "home movies," which he enjoyed in a projection-room on the second floor, alone or in the company of a score or more of friends. Sometimes, when alone, he went to this room and edited pictures which he had taken on one of his trips. He also found recreation in his third-floor workroom and when he prepared for a trip he spent many hours there. He constructed containers for the boxes of food and supplies and made the containers of such size and shape that the boxes they held would not move about, and so they could not be upset, or lost.

In preparation for Mr. Eastman's Alaska trip, Miss Cherbuliez was asked to wrap each orange (he took a crate of twelve dozen,) in cheese-cloth (to keep them from bruising) and the oranges were repacked in the crate. She also wrapped each potato,(in several bushels,) in tissue paper. Miss Cherbuliez said the potatoes were of uniform size, presumably so there would be no "favoritism" at mealtimes on the trip.
Mr. Eastman's cock, Eliza DeLee, baked a dozen plum puddings for the Alaska trip. Empty Royal Banking Powder cans (after the labels were removed and the tins sterilized by steam) were used as containers. Before the tin was sealed, Miss Cherbuliez poured a tablespoon of brandy in each container. The can was then sealed with Parowax and was made air-tight by winding two strips of adhesive tape around the top of the can where the cover fitted over.

Mr. Eastman was a radio fan from the earliest days of broadcasting. He bought an RCA battery-powered receiver in the early 'twenties and later bought an RCA console. Still later he bought an Edison. He gave the RCA set to Miss Cherbuliez. In his last three or four years, when he did not have so many guests as formerly, Mr. Eastman listened to the radio for hours at a time, and often read while he listened. Miss Cherbuliez sat beside the set with her book or her sewing and tuned from one good program to another. Mr. Eastman seldom listened to a talk on the radio unless it were of unusual importance, but listened to orchestra or piano music, or to singing. If Miss Cherbuliez was not there, Miss Minnie Mason (Mr. Eastman's nurse during his last illness) tuned the radio for him. Mr. Eastman listened until eleven o'clock at night, if Miss Cherbuliez or Miss Mason sat up with him. Sometimes during his last two years, he listened to late evening programs on his table-model Fada in his bedroom.

He had a "sitting-room" on the first floor in which he sometimes sat alone and where he often entertained a handful of friends at bridge. An informal dinner preceded the card playing and after the playing, at about 11:30, Mr. Eastman went to the kitchen and prepared Welsh Rarebit. A higher culinary accomplishment was Mr. Eastman's
ability to make lemon meringue pie. Eliza DeLee baked one of these from a recipe given by Miss Cherbuliez and Mr. Eastman was so pleased with it that one evening (he was nearly 70 at the time) he decided to make one himself.

Dr. Robert A. Millikan, the celebrated physicist, was a guest at Mr. Eastman's home at the time and Eliza who had baked the pie-crust came into the sitting room and said it was ready for the filling. This had to be made in a double boiler and stirred steadily for twenty minutes. Mr. Eastman stirred the gradually thickening material for five minutes and became so tired he called to Nathaniel, the second butler, "Here, come and stir it for me!" In a short time Mr. Eastman and his guest enjoyed large pieces of lemon meringue pie. One of Mr. Eastman's friends, Dr. E.S. Ingersoll, also prided himself on his skill in making these pies. When Dr. Ingersoll boasted of a pie he had made, Mr. Eastman said it couldn't have been as good as the one he made. So each made a pie and sent it to the other's home for his opponent to judge. The contest was a draw, for each one insisted his own was the better.

Father Francis P. Duffy, Roman Catholic Chaplain of the 69th Regiment, New York National Guard, was a guest, among a score of others, at Mr. Eastman's home in 1920. It was a Friday and Miss Cherbuliez (she entertained the guests pending the arrival of Mr. Eastman who had telephoned he was delayed at the office) said "Well, Father Duffy, I know this is 'fish-day' for you, and I would have given you one course of fish but I had to 'ring in' a little meat on account of the others. Father Duffy replied "My dear, I am having a holiday and
I'll eat anything that is served me." The loveable Chaplain of the "Fighting 69th" then related: "Coming up to Rochester on the train I went to the dining car to get breakfast and ordered a big rasher of bacon and eggs this very morning and as it was set before me my companion poked me and said "Father Duffy, this is Friday!" I replied "Why didn't you wait until I got that in my stomach? Now you have spoiled my breakfast!" Miss Cherbuliez told this pleasant story to Mr. Eastman who appreciated Father Duffy's wit and broad-mindedness.

Miss Cherbuliez told of Mr. Eastman's usual activities on Sunday. Sometimes he had a few friends for breakfast and they left soon afterwards. He might have three or four intimate friends for dinner, who also took their leave soon after the meal. At 6 o'clock a musicale was given by the Kilbourn String Quartet and piano, after which supper was served to the approximately 100 guests. From 8:30 to 9:00 an evening concert was given in the Conservatory by the Kilbourn Quartet and the organ (and sometimes a piano soloist.) Printed invitation cards were sent to persons invited to the Sunday evening concerts. Responses were expected to these invitations. If the persons invited had not replied by the day before the concerts, Miss Cherbuliez telephoned them. Duplicate lists of persons invited were typed and Miss Cherbuliez rotated the guests every Sunday from the long list of Mr. Eastman's friends.

Mr. Eastman was not a man to sentimentalize. He usually tore up personal letters as soon as they had been answered and did not keep them to re-read as relics of friendship. However, he kept the printed menus of special dinners to notables who had been his guests.
In the later years of his life he talked frequently about the past, mostly about his mother and her loveliness of character.

Mr. Eastman read considerably and his magazine subscriptions in his active years, included Fortune, American, National Geographic, Time and several technical photographic and general scientific magazines. When his health was poor toward the close of his life he developed the habit of reading detective stories to keep his mind off things and he customarily read several of these every week.

The wine cellar of Mr. Eastman’s home was not heavily stocked. He had champagnes, sherry, port, and sauterne, but the supply was very moderate. Miss Cherbuliez never saw Mr. Eastman take liquor or wine when alone. When guests were present he served cocktails, and at formal dinners wine was served. Mr. Eastman apparently had no favorite wines and was not a connoisseur of liquors. He inclined, in Miss Cherbuliez’ opinion, toward asceticism in his habits. He was an unusually clean-minded and clean-living man.

Shortly before Prohibition became effective in the United States, in 1920, Miss Cherbuliez said to Mr. Eastman "Don’t you think it would be advisable to get a dozen or two of some liquor for purposes of cooking?" All that Mr. Eastman had her purchase was six bottles of cooking sherry and six bottles of brandy. Mr. Eastman said to her "If Prohibition becomes a law I will abide by it." Mr. Eastman, during Prohibition, never bought liquors from bootleggers— or from anybody else. He made no comment to Miss Cherbuliez as to whether or not he approved of Prohibition. It was a law, and to George Eastman a law was not something to question, but something to obey.