Interview with Stephen B. Cornell, President and General Manager, Canadian Kodak Co., Limited

Mr. Cornell was manager (1899-1900) of the New Jersey Aristo-type Co. (Bloomfield, N.J.) a division of the General Aristo-type Company of Jamestown, N.Y. He was manager (1901-02) of the Nepara Chemical Company, near Yonkers, N.Y., which plant was purchased by Mr. Eastman and moved to Kodak Park. Then he became assistant to Mr. Clarence Snow, manager of Eastman Kodak Company's wholesale branch in New York City, on West 22nd Street, near Fifth Avenue. A wholesale branch had been established in Chicago at about the same time and, in December, 1903, Mr. Eastman telephoned to Mr. Cornell in New York City and asked him if he would like to become manager of the Chicago wholesale branch, to succeed Mr. Frank S. Noble. He accepted the position.

Mr. Cornell remembered the high spirits in which Mr. Eastman returned from his Western camping trips, and how he usually came in to talk for a few hours when changing trains at Chicago on his way home to Rochester. Mr. Cornell was seated at his desk on one occasion and was startled when a sombrero suddenly was thrown on his desk top. He looked up and saw Mr. Eastman with "chaps", boots, and rough woolen shirt, smiling at him. He sat down and described the Western streams and the country through which they flowed; he described the fish he had caught in these streams and the methods he used to catch them. He told where the party had camped and of their experiences. He enjoyed the out-of-doors so much that he talked more than usual after he returned from vacations. Sometimes his skin peeled from sunburn and...
Mr. Cornell said to him "You certainly look as if you had been living out of doors. Mr. Eastman replied heartily "I certainly feel as if I had been."

During the seven years that Mr. Cornell was manager of the wholesale office in Chicago he came to Rochester regularly twice a year. Mr. Eastman's greeting invariably was cordial "Glad to see you, Cornell. Take a seat. What's the worst you know?" This question put it up to Mr. Cornell to lead in the conversation. Mr. Eastman proceeded to open and read his mail while Mr. Cornell talked, so Mr. Cornell stopped talking. Mr. Eastman said "Go ahead. I can read these and get what you say at the same time." (Apparently information which he obtained through vision was not confused in his mind with that which he obtained simultaneously through the sense of hearing.)

Mr. Eastman invited Mr. Cornell, in 1910, to Rochester to confer with him. The outcome of their conference was that Mr. Cornell was sent to Toronto as Assistant General Manager (Mr. John C. Palmer was General Manager) of Canadian Kodak Co., Limited. When Mr. Cornell came with Mr. Palmer to Rochester to see Mr. Eastman occasionally Mr. Eastman usually made the remark as the two men entered his office "I see you came over in tandem again." He usually did not smile when he made pleasant remarks of this sort, but there was a twinkle in his eye.

Mr. Cornell was glad Mr. Eastman knew the difficulties in the manufacture of sensitized goods for when the Toronto plant ran into trouble Mr. Eastman understood and was reasonable. He asked if the trouble had been straightened out and how much the loss was. On one occasion Mr. Cornell had quite a large manufacturing loss and when he
told Mr. Eastman about it he understandably asked "Are you ever
going to get into that trouble again?" Mr. Cornell replied "No,
because we have too many danger signals out." (signs by which the
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Mr. Eastman, Mr. Frank W. Lovejoy, and Mr. Frank S. Havens
went to Toronto as bearers for the funeral of Mr. John G. Palmer (he
died August 4, 1921) who was a director of Canadian Kodak Co., Limited.
Messrs. Eastman, Lovejoy, Havens and Cornell lunched at the King Edward
Hotel and commented that as Mr. Frank S. Noble, also a director of
Canadian Kodak Co., Limited, had died on July 6, 1921, there was need
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You have only three directors today, and a month ago there were five."

They went to the office of Mr. Walter J. Boland, the company's
attorney, and with him acting as secretary pro-tem, they elected two
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A quorum was present so they held a directors' meeting and asked Mr.
Cornell to resign these jobs and the motions were made and carried.
After they had all been carried Mr. Eastman pleasantly remarked "Now
you've resigned, what are you going to do?" Mr. Cornell replied in
the same vein. "Well, I should like to have my name left on the payroll.
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It was interesting that Mr. Eastman wanted recommendations, not suggestions. A recommendation entailed study, while a suggestion might be made on impulse, without careful thought preceding it. So Mr. Eastman, when in doubt, inquired, "Are you suggesting it, or recommending it?"

When the Chicago branch at Indiana Ave. and 18th Streets was being erected in 1904-05, Mr. Eastman came into the office at 45 Randolph Street and Mr. Cornell offered to take him over to the new structure by taxi. Mr. Eastman decided a street car would do. There was a ladder and they climbed up the skeleton framework and walked about it, four stories above the street. Mr. Eastman walked about on the narrow girders as though he had done it all his life and when they came down he calmly brushed the dust off his hands and inquired the way to the station—by street car.

Mr. Eastman was interested in the prices of even small items he bought and was annoyed when their prices seemed to him to be exorbitant. Mr. Cornell once conversed with Mr. Eastman in the lobby of King Edward Hotel in 1921-22 when he took a party of friends to a concert in Toronto and paid for fourteen tickets rather than take them free as had been offered. Fourteen tickets and the travelling expenses of his party meant little to him but he was interested that
the price of Lucky Strike cigarettes was 35¢ a pack. "It's an outrage", he said to Mr. Cornell. "Tell me why they are so high." Mr. Cornell replied the duty was high on tobacco and the excise tax was also higher than in the United States. We could buy Canadian cigarettes more cheaply than those imported from the United States. Mr. Eastman listened and replied "I understand. I believe in protection for home industries."

When, in June, 1915, property was bought outside the city of Toronto for Kodak Co. Limited new plant, entailing an investment of more than $100,000 no written confirmation was sent to Mr. Cornell of the directors' agreement to go ahead with this. Mr. Frank S. Noble, Mr. Frank W. Lovejoy, Mr. James N. Baste and Mr. Perley S. Wilcox listened and after the discussion was finished Mr. Eastman asked "Are we all certain I told Mr. Cornell he could buy that property at that price?" The directors replied "Yes," and this was Mr. Cornell's authorization. Progress pictures were sent to Mr. Eastman at least once a month while the building was being erected. Mr. C.H. Flint was the engineer in charge of erecting the building. It stood on a 25-acre plot, which has since been increased to 40 acres.

There was discussion concerning a proper name for this site. One day Mr. Cornell, Mr. John G. Palmer and Mr. Perley S. Wilcox were driving about the rolling country around Toronto and as they went over a hill and saw the plant rising on a height in the distance Mr. Cornell said to Mr. Wilcox, who had just mentioned something about the name, "I've got a name for it, Perley--Kodak Heights." Mr. Palmer and Mr. Wilcox thought that sounded well and Mr. Cornell wrote to Mr. Eastman
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Yours very truly,

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(signed) S. B. Cornell
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Toronto, April 10, 1930.

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