

MARKUS

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Interview with Charles W. Markus,
Director of Purchasing,
Kodak Park

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Mr. Markus remarked upon the difficulty of understanding a man, who was as reticent as Mr. Eastman, even if one spent many years in his employ. When Mr. Eastman gave a man a job to do, he did not tell him afterwards how to do it. Even when a job was finished he usually made few comments upon it, unless it were unsatisfactory. Mr. Eastman did not want to be bothered by any kind of small talk during business hours. He especially disliked to have his time wasted by persons who liked to talk in criticism of others but who had few constructive ideas as to how they could handle the situation better.

Several instances of the lighter side of Mr. Eastman's life were recalled. Mr. Markus remembered an incident that happened in Chicago, about 1905, when Mr. Eastman showed that he had not been a great mixer, and was not familiar with all the innuendos and practices of the boys who had "been around." This incident occurred when Mr. Eastman attended a meeting of store managers, in place of Charles S. Abbott of the General Aristo Company, who usually presided over the group. They were in Mr. Eastman's room in the Auditorium Hotel. A Norwegian salesman from Chicago by the name of Chris Anderson felt rather parched and thought he would hint to Mr. Eastman about it. (Mr. Abbott did not need hints, according to Mr. Markus) So Anderson picked up a glass pitcher of water from a table and swished it around suggestively. Mr. Eastman did not "catch on" but took it

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very literally. "Wait a minute, ^{Chris}Carl", he said, "That water must be pretty stale. I'll send down and get a fresh pitcher of water." Some time afterwards Mr. Frank Noble told Mr. Eastman what ^{Chris}Carl had intended to suggest, and he laughed in good humor at his own lack of sophistication. Mr. Eastman gradually learned the various ways and tricks of convivial persons and, in later years, he understood them better.

Mr. Eastman's careful use of the English language has been noted by several persons. Mr. Markus gave a fine example of the disturbing effect of poor English upon Mr. Eastman. Mr. Frank Noble and Mr. Markus, about thirty-five years ago, went with him to Milwaukee to open a new Kodak store. The manager, John Baggs, had prepared an advertising pamphlet which he had distributed about the city to advertise the opening. He thought it was pretty good and showed one of the leaflets to Mr. Eastman, who picked it up and read it. He discovered an error in rhetoric which disturbed him and he put it down without comment other than to murmur "mixed metaphor." Mr. Markus doesn't know just what displeased him, but he apparently continued to think about it for quite a time afterward. When he left the store he said again, half to himself, "mixed metaphor." Mr. Eastman was unusually precise in his ^{use of} language, especially for a self-trained man, and it really pained him to see the language misused.

Mr. Markus never saw Mr. Eastman lose his temper. In the early days Mr. Eastman had a lot to try him but as time went on these difficulties were conquered and he got better control of himself. Rather than being loud and self-assertive, Mr. Markus found that Mr. Eastman could be almost self-effacing. He didn't

insist upon special privilege just because he was George Eastman. On Christmas Eve in 1915, Mr. Markus saw Mr. Eastman taking leave of James Bryce, when he left for Washington after a brief visit to Rochester. There was quite a crowd waiting for the train at the New York Station before Mr. Bryce left and Mr. Eastman and the distinguished Englishman were in the front line. Mr. Eastman happened to step out ahead of the line and a policeman, who was intent upon keeping the line in formation, pushed him back. Mr. Eastman offered no resistance, but good-naturedly accepted the discipline of the officer who was trying to maintain good order in a large crowd of people, and he didn't insist upon special privilege because he was a "big man."

He mixed with the crowd and was "one of the boys" at company picnics in the early days. He entered the sports and enjoyed baseball particularly. Some fellow was "liquored up" at one of these picnics and when Mr. Eastman was at bat he encouraged him to "Hit it out, old man!" Mr. Eastman was not visibly annoyed, for he took it for granted that some people would get drunk and he made allowance for their conduct when they were drunk. Some of the other picnickers were so annoyed at this loud-mouthed chap that they tied him to a tree until he sobered up a little.

Mr. Eastman was inclined to ride his hobbies pretty hard. When he came across a new mechanical gadget, he enthusiastically wanted to use it on every possible occasion. At one time the hobby he rode was safety razors. At another time it was pencil sharpeners, and Frank Crouch told Mr. Markus about an incident with regard to sharpeners. A meeting of fifteen or twenty men was scheduled at Kodak Office for a conference. Mr. Eastman got there early and

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no one was around but Mr. Crouch. Mr. Eastman looked at the pencils that were placed about the table and said they looked as if rats had chewed them. "Crouch", he inquired "did you sharpen those pencils?" Mr. Crouch said he didn't. Mr. Eastman said in irritation "Well, go out and get fifty pencil sharpeners, a hundred if necessary, and let's have the pencils around here sharpened decently!" He was so disconcerted at the badly sharpened pencils that he left the room and did not stay for the meeting.

Mr. Eastman was watchful of waste and he disliked to see people indulge in it. One day Mr. Markus sat in his office talking with him and a roll of blue prints was brought in, with at least half a dozen rubber bands wrapped around it. "What's the idea", Mr. Eastman wondered, "of putting all those rubber bands around them? One or two would have been enough." He probably felt that time, as well as material, had been wasted in putting on superfluous bands.

Frank Crouch was probably the man who knew Mr. Eastman best and he gave a lot of time to the study of Mr. Eastman's mind. This story revolves about the fact that Mr. Eastman's systematic mind insisted that the shades in his office be pulled down to exactly the same length all around the room. Mr. Crouch happened to be in Mr. Eastman's office a few minutes before he came in one morning and, in his hurry to leave before Mr. Eastman arrived, he left one of the shades out of line with the others. A few minutes later Mr. Eastman phoned him and said tersely "Crouch, come up!" Mr. Crouch knew that something was wrong, as Mr. Eastman usually called him "Frank", and called him "Crouch" only when he was annoyed. He went into the room and fixed the shade without saying anything to

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Mr. Eastman, for he knew through experience, that it was not the time to explain. The following morning, when it seemed more opportune, Mr. Crouch said to Mr. Eastman "You know that shade that I fixed for you yesterday. I adjusted the shades before you came in but the spring "let go" on that one and I didn't have time to fix it before you came in." Mr. Eastman replied "That's all right, Frank," His annoyance had vanished and he was perfectly serene now that the shades were in perfect alignment again.

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