

PARKER

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Interview with Mr. A.D. Parker,
Manager of Central Sales Division

Mr. Parker was aide to Mr. Eastman when the latter made his first trip to Japan in 1920. Mr. Eastman called him up and asked if he could go on two week's notice. They went with the Harriman party which had been invited by the Mitsuis who were heading a commission which wanted American business men and bankers to come to Japan and negotiate a loan. Mr. Eastman asked Mr. Parker to a previous boat and meet him at the dock. When they got over there the Japanese committee took Mr. Eastman in tow and Parker didn't see him for a week or two, the only contacts being several made by telephone.

Mr. Eastman was no hand to joke, according to Mr. Parker's impressions and he didn't hear him tell one all the time he was with him. Mr. Parker felt that Mr. Eastman was just as business-like while on a trip as he would be in his office.

Punctuality was an Eastman trait, he found, giving as an example a breakfast appointment. When the welcoming committee had finished taking him around Mr. Eastman one evening came to the hotel where Mr. Parker was staying and asked him what time he went to breakfast. Mr. Parker thought an early hour would be best so he said eight o'clock. This was at a time when the scrub-women had hardly finished their work in the dining room. However, he arrived there promptly and found Mr. Eastman there "right on the dot."

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While Mr. Eastman was in Yokohama Mr. Parker asked him if he would like to see a use to which film was put. So they went down to "Theater Street" to a movie where the action was explained, Japanese fashion, by an announcer. They sat through fifteen or twenty minutes of a play of historical nature. Mr. Parker thought that Mr. Eastman looked bored and he asked him "Have you seen enough of this?" Mr. Eastman replied "I've seen plenty!" However, he made no further comment. He usually wanted the other person to do the talking.

Mr. Eastman, according to Mr. Parker, kept very much to himself. He would stay in his room quite a bit except for meals. He attended two large banquets given by Hosimini and Konomy, the two largest distributors. At one he was asked to make a speech. This was at a meeting of the largest photo material dealers of Tokyo. Mr. Eastman didn't like this idea and queried "What will I do or say?" Mr. Parker replied "It's easy. I've been asked to make two or three myself. It takes several times as long for them to translate as it does to speak your piece so you have plenty of time to think between sentences."

The banquets were given in Japanese style with everyone sitting on the floor and eating from small trays. Incidentally, Mr. Eastman usually ate heartily, Mr. Parker said. Mr. Eastman afterwards complained that he could hardly straighten his knees after sitting cross-legged for several hours.

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Mr. Eastman would take short sight-seeing walks with Mr. Parker, mostly through the business section where they looked at stores and institutions. They didn't make any snapshots on these walks and Mr. Parker doesn't recall seeing Mr. Eastman use ^{a Kodak} ~~film~~ on the trip although he probably had one with him.

Occasionally Mr. Parker would stop in of an evening to have a smoke with Mr. Eastman in his hotel room before the latter retired at 9 or 9:30 since there wasn't much doing to keep him up later. Mr. Eastman's conversational technique was to ask just enough leading questions to keep the other person going while most of the time he remained on the listening end.

Distribution was different in Japan, Mr. Parker pointed out. And they were interested, too, in getting data on manufacturing there. Distribution was effected through large Japanese firms which imported goods in gross packages and large sheets. These were cut and repacked. Here we ship in the same package that goes to the consumer.

Mr. Parker had travelled in the Orient for Eastman Kodak and had made the first contacts there. Mr. Eastman had been contacted by the larger dealers to visit them and Mr. Parker, because of his experience of eleven or twelve years in that region, was selected as an aide.

There were two photo factions, both of which wanted to give banquets to Mr. Eastman. One had its headquarters in Tokyo and the other in Osaka, but both wanted their banquet held in Tokyo. It worked out that one was held in Tokyo and the other in Osaka.

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Asked as to Mr. Eastman's travelling habits, Mr. Parker said that he travelled with light luggage. He wore a tweed suit, or a change of tweed, for days in succession. Perhaps this was because he had seen Englishmen wearing them and also because they were comfortable in that climate.

A Japanese government steamer had been put at the disposal of the party on the way to Japan. On returning Mr. Eastman and some of the party came back on the government boat. Mr. Parker and Mr. Harriman returned on a regular liner.

The Japanese are generous--especially when generosity may evoke ample returns--so that on turning homeward Mr. Eastward brought back a cabin-full of souvenirs. Many are at the Eastman house now, Mr. Parker believes, including bric a brac, ivories, bronzes--perhaps paintings and other items. He could hardly get into Mr. Eastman's cabin because of the abundance of these packages--all neatly wrapped. Some were from photo material dealers. They were mostly gifts, although possibly some of the items may have been purchased by Mr. Eastman.

Mr. Parker doesn't know how Mr. Eastman got the invitation for this trip. Julian Street, the writer, went with the party from New York to Seattle and from there on, being with the party while it was being shown about. He would know the "backing" angle of it, Mr. Parker believes. The party included about eighteen persons and some of the men had their wives with them.