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# CHARLES FRANKLIN KETTERING

By ROBERT G. DERRENBERGER, '39



*Courtesy General Motors Co.\**

**CHARLES F. KETTERING**

**I**N THE life of Charles Kettering, Ohio State's most distinguished alumnus, there are many worth while lessons of value for every citizen in the country. He learned as a boy to think in a straight line and to overcome obstacles and get facts.

Charles F. Kettering's career has been an unusual one. At a first glance his background seems a strange one for an executive of a huge automobile company but an analysis of his qualities will reveal the reason. Perhaps the very difference of his early life has contributed much to his rise in the industrial and inventive fields.

The determination, indomitable perseverance and the policy of never taking no for an answer, outstanding characteristics in Kettering's early life, still manifest themselves today. While an engineering student at our Ohio State University he was always attempting to simplify problems which confronted him. The obstacles and difficulties which dishearten many men merely served to sharpen his determination.

Kettering is a tall, well built individual. He speaks with sparkling vitality, yet never with a waste of words.

His manner is friendly and free from any suggestion of dominance.

His early life was very similar to the average person. He was born on a farm near Loudonville, Ohio, a town located about seventy miles directly north of Columbus. Here Kettering received his high school education. Then he went to Wooster Normal and finally to Ohio State. His passion for mechanical experiments and for chemistry and electricity asserted themselves early in his life. While in college Kettering was seriously handicapped by trouble with his eyes and many of his lessons had to be read to him by his roommates. Even with this trouble confronting him, Kettering determined to finish his education and he did.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about Kettering is his patience and his systematic way of thinking. When a problem is given to him he takes it apart, finds out the cold facts and then works out the solution. He is a thinker who goes straight through prejudice and fog and always ends with a sane conclusion.

Wealth and fame have come to Kettering as a result of his asking "why." When he finally gets the answer he sells it to anyone who has reason to be interested in it. "Boss" Kettering, as he is referred to by Paul De Kruif in a series of articles written for *Saturday Evening Post*, said, "Invention is forty per cent research and sixty per cent selling, that the invention itself is merely the solution of a problem but the selling consists of converting the public thought to accept the invention.

Whether in the capacity of an inventor or industrialist Kettering's quest for an expedient solution to his problems is foremost in his mind. He seems to know at all times what things he wants accomplished and can see no profit in delay. He works very rapidly and with great precision, accomplishes a vast amount of detail work and still acts in the capacity of president of the Research Department of General Motors Corporation, maintaining constant touch with every phase of his organization. Oddly enough, Mr. Kettering never seems to be pressed or hurried but apparently takes life easily and tranquilly.

Ohio State University is proud of Charles Kettering and this magazine welcomes the opportunity to pay tribute to him whom we all think of as America's second Edison.