

## Charles F. Larner ( - 29 Aug 1896)

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**Larner.** On Saturday, August 29, 1896 at 11:35 o'clock a.m., Charles Frederick Larner, son of the late Michael and Christiana Larner. Funeral from his late residence, No. 23, Grant place, Tuesday afternoon, September 1 at 3:30 o'clock. Friends of the family invited.

*The Washington Post, August 30, 1896*

### **His Fad Was Funerals**

### **"Poor Charlie" Larner Will Go from the Next in a Hearse**

### **All the Undertakers Knew Him**

### **For Years He Delights in Attending Obsequies of the Dead,**

### **and When Young and Active Would Follow the Body to Its Last Resting Place --**

### **Preference for Funerals When There Was Music --**

### **Much Funeral Display Always Pleased Him**

"Poor Charlie" Larner will attend his last funeral on Tuesday. He had been a prominent figure at the obsequies over the remains of hundreds of people, who have lived and died in Washington, but he will not be able to see the procession of carriages on their way to Congressional Cemetery on Tuesday, for "Poor Charlie" will ride in the hearse.

Charles Frederick Larner, which was his full name, was one of the best known characters in Washington. He was born here and lived here all his life. Although a man close upon fifty-five years of age, he was a child mentally up to the day of his death. He had many peculiarities, the most remarkable of which was the intense satisfaction he took in attending funerals. He had an impediment in his speech, which made it difficult for any one not familiar with him to understand what he said. Everybody sympathized with him in his affliction, and he was a general favorite in the downtown section. Every undertaker in town was well acquainted with him.

Charlie was taken sick about three months ago, and was missed from his accustomed haunts. On Friday his complaint took an unfavorable turn, and yesterday morning, at 11:35, he died at 23 Grant place, where he had lived for a number of years. Charlie's father made ample provision for his son's support, and two sisters took care of him. It is said that valuable real estate at the corner of Ninth and D streets is held in his name.

### *Liked Funerals from Boyhood*

Some of the older men in the undertaking business can remember that when Charlie was a boy he took the same delight in attending a funeral that was so much a peculiarity of his later years. At that time he used occasionally to induce the driver of the hearse or one of the carriages to let him ride on the box seat. All the drivers and livery stable men knew him as well as the undertakers. Later on in life his taste ran to funerals in which music was a feature. He would march with the procession all the way to the cemetery and never seemed to get tired. Once at a funeral conducted by a fraternal organization Charlie in some way got possession of the regalia of some order, and dressing himself up in it he walked in the front rank all the way to the grave. That was one of the proudest days of his life.

He grew very stout, however, and took to carrying a heavy cane, so finding it no easy matter to walk to the cemeteries with his 200 or more pounds avoirdupois, he began to content himself with standing in front of the church or house where the procession started and watching while the casket was placed

in the hearse and the mourners took their places in the carriages. Then he would turn and walk slowly away.

#### *Attended in a Furniture Wagon*

He had a habit of calling on the undertakers frequently and asking them whether they were going to conduct a funeral that day and where the procession would start. He has been known to hire a carriage for himself in order to attend a funeral, and once or twice he went in a furniture wagon, after the liver stable keepers refused to rent him a carriage.

Most of the undertakers would humor him when he asked for information regarding funerals, but some of them were inclined to regard his presence as an annoyance and send him to distant localities, where no obsequies were to be held. He never resented this, but finally learned that he was not receiving reliable information and kept away. He had no particular preference as to funerals, although the greater the display the more satisfaction he seemed to be afforded. There was no morbid curiosity about him, and he seemed not to be impressed with the mournful side of such affairs. Apparently he found a genuine pleasure in being present at a funeral, and when the entire ceremony was over he appeared as much satisfied as if he had achieved something of great benefit to the community at large. He never departed without a word to the undertaker in charge. "You are a friend of mine," he used to say smilingly. "You are going to bury me when I die."

#### *Always Asking for Cigars*

Charlie was a great smoker and rarely met a person without asking for a cigar. Failing to get a cigar he would ask for a cent, and if neither were forthcoming he would moderate his demands down to a match. It made him almost as happy to get the match as it did to secure the cigar. His funeral fad clung to him as long as he was able to be about. He attended a big funeral near his own home about a year ago, and was honored with a seat in one of the carriages, much to his satisfaction.

Charlie has said a hundred times to Undertaker Gawler: "You'll bury me when I die." And so he will.