

Commissioner Ferdinand Morton Tells why He is a Bachelor

TAMMANY BOSS HUMAN DESPITE COLD EXTERIOR

Wears Hat to Hide Absence of His Hair, Even Indoors.

HE'S A BACHELOR

Most of His Work Done at Night.



FERDINAND MORTON, N. Y. Civil Service Commissioner

NEW YORK.—Interviewing Ferdinand Q. Morton, New York's Civil Service commissioner, is only accomplished by persistence. It may take six months, but in the end it is worth while.

For one thing, the reporter wonders why the commissioner keeps his hat on at his Tammany office. He doesn't ask because he's fairly certain that the reason is the Morton hair has gotten to the point where it is "too late for Herpicide."

Next is the speculation as to why this austere man of middle age is still a bachelor.

He doesn't dare ask that question either, because there are stories of the engagement of the commissioner to a beautiful Memphis girl, then studying at Columbia University a decade ago. Rumor has it that en route to the jeweler's to buy a \$75 engagement ring, he met a friend in need. The friend went his way with the \$75 and Mr. Morton without a ring. Thus ended a near matrimonial venture.

Patron to Many

Paul Robeson, Harry Bragg, Strut Payne, the late Jimmy McLendon, Turner and Layton, the London Singers and many thus have known the commissioner as friend and benefactor.

Speaking of Morton stories, there is another that the commissioner keeps frightfully late hours working at his office in the afternoon (when he's not at the baseball game) and spending his nights at the club where he conducts Tammany's affairs.

Thus he gets to bed many a morning at 3 o'clock. The story runs that on one of these occasions his landlady found his key on the floor outside his door and asked him if he had lost a key. His reply was, "Yes, in the dust under my bed."

To Mayor Walker the commissioner is Ferdie; to the commissioner the Mayor is Jimmie. Mayor Walker never accepts an engagement to speak in Harlem unless he asks if his

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It takes those good, old CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS to get those two pounds of bile flowing freely and make you feel "up and up." They contain wonderful, harmless, gentle vegetable extracts, amazing when it comes to making the bile flow freely.

But don't ask for liver pills. Ask for Carter's Little Liver Pills. Look for the name Carter's Little Liver Pills on the red label. Rosent's substitute, 25c at all stores. © 1931 C. M. Co.



Builds Healthy Blood

political and civil rights and he did his part to see that they got them.

Twenty-five years in the training of a machine that has cracked the political whip in New York for more than one hundred and twenty-five years, teaches a man many things. Tammany Hall teaches her men not to bark but to bite, not to rush in heedlessly but to be alert, to act swiftly when the proper time comes.

I asked him how he viewed the political scene. Colored people fighting in the nineteenth and twenty-first assembly districts for official political representation at the council table of Tammany Hall, in his crisp and in-

clusive voice he replied, "It is a healthy sign to see the colored man demanding more adequate representation in Tammany Hall."

"It has been felt by a majority of right-thinking people that the rights of the colored man have been adequately served through the United Colored Democracy. When the 'Hall' is aware that this is not the case, the procedure that has always been followed will be put into practice, namely, giving the people what they want when they demand it. It seems to me the natural course of things, electing colored leaders to the 19th and 21st assembly districts since these districts are predominantly colored."

Got No Diploma

I looked at this man Morton, who had made such a record as a debater at Harvard. It was she who refused to accept a compromise because of a discrepancy in his English units and

left school without receiving a diploma, completing the four-year course in three years.

I thought of a curious thing about him. He was living up to his reputation of night owl. It is well known that Mr. Morton is a man who almost never goes to bed before four or five in the morning. He rises late, getting to his office near the noon hour.

Declined Judgeship

"Yes, I suppose there was a time when I could have earned much from the private practice of law. When the opportunity did present itself to me, I did not accept it, and opportunities have a way of not repeating themselves."

"How about the Magistracy that was offered you in 1924?"

"I declined that offer because I felt it would curtail my usefulness in politics, and I was not ready to relinquish my political services."

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friend is also to be there.

Still another story concerns his refusal to head the Al Smith for President National Committee in 1928 because it set up jim-crow headquarters.

At the time of this interview Commissioner Morton sat in the office of the United Colored Democracy, one of the political country cousins of the great and glamorous family Tammany Hall—it was nearly 2 o'clock in the morning—he fitted exactly into the type one expects to find in a genuine product of this family.

The Panama

With a large Panama hat turned down in front and placed on his head at a somewhat rakish angle, a white soft-collared shirt with blue tie, a dark striped suit and carefully polished shoes, he looked the part of an aristocrat, and one might add, with the haughty bearing of a Virginia planter. Cold, almost steely eyes that have a way of opening wide at intervals, look out at and through you. And yet, with it all, Ferdinand Q. Morton, born in Washington, D.C., is quite human. He likes a good game of baseball, fishes in season, and plays an excellent game of bridge.

Broke With Old Guards

In Democratic politics in New York City, he represents the breaking away from the old guard made up of such men as "Chief" Edward Lee, John Bell, Gale A. Simms, William A. Dickerson, and Robert Wood. These men shaped the tenets of the organization from the time of its inception in 1897 up to 1915, when, after a bitter fight, Mr. Morton was elected the leader in the United Colored Democracy.

It was back in 1897 that Lemuel Eli Quigg made the assertion which rolled the colored constituency and proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back. He was then chairman of the Republican county committee. He said, "I know colored people better than they know themselves; you couldn't drive them out of the Republican party with a sledgehammer." It was then that the Rev. Mr. Ernest Lyon, now of Baltimore, but then pastor of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church, and chairman of the Republican National Bureau in charge of matters affecting colored people, and the late James Carr, brother of Dr. William Carr, of Baltimore, decided that the Republican party in New York had played with the colored people long enough.

Cursed and Praised

Like many members of Tammany Hall whose names are watchwords, Ferdinand Q. Morton has been buffeted about by the shifting tides of political opinion, been alternately cursed and praised, been bowed by defeat and courted by victory. When he came to New York in 1908, fresh from Harvard and a year at the law school of Boston University, he went into the law office of J. Frank Wheaton, of the law firm of Wheaton and Curtis. Wheaton was about as picturesque a figure as the law courts of New York have ever seen. He was a great showman, an astute lawyer and a famous pleader in murder cases.

Ready for South America

Morton, disgusted with the prospects of a career, was about to go to South America when Tammany-boss Charley Murphy offered him a post in the District Attorney's office. Murphy was not used to the type of colored politician that Morton represented. He did get used to this new type, however, and was later largely responsible for his appointment to the office of Civil Service commissioner.

Friend

His mind harking back to those days, Mr. Morton said, "I don't like the term 'friend' when speaking of the white man and his relation to the colored man, but for the lack of a better term, I use it in connection with Charles F. Murphy. He was the greatest friend the colored man has had in twenty-five years of the political life of this city. He believed that the colored man was entitled to all