

Just About Washington

By

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The world's most prominent men and women once consulted the Delphic oracle at the shimmering bases of Mount Parnassus in Greece when they wanted to know



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what would happen next . . . A number of leading Washingtonians go regularly to licensed palmists, phrenologists and crystal gazers who charge sky-high fees and reap a rich harvest year in and year out . . . But the seers and "psychic scientists" who have been preying on residents of the Panama Canal Zone for some time had better watch their prices and predictions closely for the next few months. President Truman has his eye on them.

Here's why. Since the new Chief Executive took over the reins of State, he has been going over old statutes to determine exactly the duties of the President of the United States . . . Among the unusual chores he has unearthed is this—that the President shall fix the fees of all fortune tellers in the Canal Zone! . . . Now that's one duty Harry Truman certainly did not anticipate when he set up housekeeping at 1600 Pennsylvania . . . Whether he will send a special Fortune Telling Commission to the Canal Zone to look over the situation and bring back recommendations as to what the fees should be has not yet been determined. But, in case he does, my personal nomination for the Capitalite best suited to head it is Mrs. James Hamilton ("Gypsy") Lewis, widow of the Illinois Senator.

FOR SWEET CHARITY

For years, at charity bazaars, Red Cross benefits, hospitals and canteens "Gypsy" Lewis has been reading palms . . . No Romany roader was ever more able to read the past and predict the future . . . She could make a fortune herself out of the "fortunes" she tells to others, but nobody yet has ever been allowed to cross her palm with silver . . . Fees that come her way never touch her hand. They go directly into benefit coffers.

Fortune telling has been one of her hobbies since she was a youngster in Screven County, Ga. . . . Gypsy caravans, on their way to camp on the Savannah River, passed her parents' plantation frequently . . . She recalls slipping off from home as a child of six and finding her way to a Gypsy "mother" who took her money, looked at her tiny palm and predicted she would die before her twenty-fifth birthday! . . . She was so distressed that she began comparing the lines in her hand with the lines in those of her relatives . . . Years later, while traveling abroad, she visited fortune tellers in Spain, North Africa, Hungary and Russia and learned many tricks of their trade. Then, as a Senator's wife in Washington, and as a widow, she became a popular palm-reading attraction at every relief bazaar of any importance . . . Since Pearl Harbor, she has devoted most of her time and talent to soldiers and sailors at canteens all over town.

CAPITAL ORACLE

She's the oracle of Washington, and no mistake about it," said a private emerging from "Gypsy's" improvised tent at a recent party for wounded soldiers. "She told me all about my past, and my character. The future? Well, she didn't say so much about that."

"I tell as little about what's going to happen, as possible," Mrs. Lewis said. "Nobody wants to know his future if it's going to be bad. If it's good, he's willing to wait to find out. Sometimes the lines are so strong, and so completely indicative that I simply have to tell where they will lead. I can't help myself."

When I asked Mrs. Lewis whether she'd be interested in sizing up the fortune telling racket in the Canal Zone, she declined to commit herself. "The job might be fascinating," she said, "and I might learn some new pointers about palms." Meanwhile, "Gypsy" plans to take off from Washington soon on an entirely personal commission. She will go first to Georgia to visit relatives, then to South Carolina and finally to Chicago to spend the remainder of the summer. Autumn will find her back in her Mayflower apartment.