

# Southern Personalities

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use it for almost everything else; but the mere thought of adding more oil to that oiliest of vegetables seems to us eccentric beyond words. Have you ever cut it into little cubes and scattered them over a clear soup, with which they blend deliciously? Out of a dozen satisfying recipes, won't you try this one next time, in the interest of international understanding?"

Muna Lee was a member of the Committee on International Action of the Woman's Party, honorary president of the Liga Social Suffragista of Cuba, in 1928; and the Director of the Commission of Public Relations and Information at the Pan American Union during the summers of 1928 and 1929. She is also a member of the Society of Women Geographers of Ateneo de Puerto Rico.

It was in 1928 that she spoke before the Sixth Pan American Conference at Havana, Cuba; and she was a member of the Nationality Committee of the Inter American Commission of Women at the more recent Lima Conference. On August 23, 1939, she addressed the World Education Congress, accepting on behalf of the University of Puerto Rico the bronze plaque sent by the Pan American Conference at Lima for the statue of Eugenio Maria de Hostos. This is the centenary year of De Hostos, Puerto Rico's great educator, one of her great patriots, and founder of the modern educational systems of Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. Miss Lee's address was on "The International Significance of De Hostos as an Educator."

IN 1926 Muna Lee translated *Four Years beneath the Crescent*, by General Raphael de Nogales. In 1924 she translated the Spanish-American number of *Poetry Magazine*, and more recently (1936) edited, with Richard Pattee (also of the University of Puerto Rico), the book *Modern Haiti*. She is contributing editor of *Equal Rights Magazine*.

"Unfortunately," she says, "there is little in all this dealing with my poetry—unfortunately, since it is my poetry that means most to me. Even my book of poems *Sea-Change* published in 1923 is out of print." As long ago as 1915, *Poetry Magazine* of Chicago awarded a prize to a group of Muna Lee's lyrics. Later she worked in the office of the magazine and from 1924 to 1927 served as secretary of the Poets

Club. She is a permanent member of the Council of the Poetry Society of America.

"My real incentive to write poetry," Miss Lee answered our query as to when and how she began to write, "was inherited from my mother, who published verse occasionally in her girlhood and who had and has a poised and sensitive appreciation of beauty in all its manifestations; from my father, who was and is gifted with sympathy and discernment; from my grandmother who loved flowers and to whom flowers responded as to no one else I've ever known. But whatever poetic gift I have has also been fostered by every favoring environment: the beautiful simplicity, dignity, and pride of Mississippi; the thrilling sweep and color of the Indian Territory prairie; the heartening friendliness of great cities, New York, Washington, Paris, Madrid; the remoteness and completeness and intensity of life on this tropic island that has been a rich port for me."

BY HER sympathetic translations, Señora Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín is doing a genuine service towards breaking down prejudice and bringing the Americas closer together. For though we do not possess a common language, certainly to understand the literature, poetry, and ballads of our neighbors should make for stronger ties between us. Legislation for peace is of primary importance, but who knows—this bond of friendly understanding may prove even deeper and more lasting.

Miss Lee enjoys long visits to "the States," but thinks Puerto Rico is the ideal place to live. She believes that a long hard struggle is an advantage, not a misfortune to a writer, and that a stiff apprenticeship is necessary in almost any line of successful work. The firmer the foundation, she believes, the better the structure.

"I have been fortunate in the places I have known; most fortunate, most blessed, in my family and my friends," she says. Because of her many achievements in public life, dedicated to extending equality to the women of all the world and promoting closer bonds between the republics of North and South America, because of the poignant poetry she has written, and because of her brilliant conversation and feminine charm, her family, friends, and the places she has known have in turn been most fortunate in their association with such a rare, vital personality as Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín.