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Bare Feet in the Palace

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of Communists. This study shows an increasing number of dioceses enforcing the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments issued in 1941 regarding the investigation of the parties to be conducted before the marriage. Such an enforcement is certainly to be desired in the Philippines, where in the majority of jurisdictions it is still non-existent. In Algeria, a Mohammedan wishing to marry a Christian must not only sign the usual *cautiones*, but also a promise to renounce polygamy. In some countries of Europe, those who court non-Catholics are to be warned immediately, and if they persist in their course, they are to be denied absolution. Of special interest are the steps taken in Mexico to rectify marriages by dispensing from stole fees at certain times of the year. These are only a few of the many interesting points contained in this study.

Finally the entire work demonstrates the fact that the provisions of the new Code of Canon Law have been gradually seeping down into the practical working life of the Church, albeit not with the same speed nor the same intensity everywhere in the world. Local conditions still present barriers to its full implementation. But provincial councils and diocesan synods have contributed much toward increasing its application, with immense benefit to the Church. We find illustrated in this painstaking study an example of the flexibility of the Church's law which, while always insisting on the fulfillment of the divine law, allows much in the way of local variation and with characteristic wisdom tries not to impose more on her children than they can bear, until gradually they may be enabled to carry out her salutary wishes to the full.

SAMUEL R. WILEY

BARE FEET IN THE PALACE

BARE FEET IN THE PALACE. By Agnes Newton Keith. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1955. Pp. 370.

Mrs. Agnes Newton Keith has dedicated this most recent of her four books "to Juan de la Cruz, who will never read it."

Bare Feet in the Palace is a charmingly written review of things Philippine, supplemented by two chapters on Japan and

one chapter on Asian women in general. It is the result of some two years' stay in Manila, one side trip to Mindanao, another side trip to Baguio, a short vacation in Japan, and a really warm attitude towards the Southeast Asian. This attitude is itself the result of eleven years' residence (divided with some violence between eight years in Sandakan and three years in a Japanese prison camp) in British North Borneo.

By now the reader may want to know how the book got its title. The book, it seems, was precipitated by Mrs. Keith's enthusiasm which found itself justified in the President's grand gesture of throwing the Malacañan gates open to all the poor people of the Philippines soon after his inauguration. This same enthusiasm finds full expression in various parts of three chapters (the book has twenty-five). Thus, ample space is available for Keith personalia and some minutiae on housewifery. Not a small portion of the book is made tender by a chronicle of tentative love in California back in the thirties, of irrevocable decisions some years later, of romantic homecomings to jungle huts in Sandakan, of real pain in war-time separations, of grateful reunions, and of Mrs. Keith's personal reactions to her household help in Manila, and finally, of the secret defeats and little triumphs in all the anxieties, big and small, of parenthood.

Despite this tendency to excessive candor, Mrs. Keith's book finds enough space—between the maid's gossip and the man-of-the-house's Britannic convictions—to make some really interesting observations on the Filipino, his country, and why both are what they are today.

She has a little treatise on the racial make-up of the Filipino (waves of Indonesian and Malay invasions plus three hundred years of Chinese and Spanish miscegenation aggravated by loneliness in U.S. soldier camps from 1898 to the present); a brief historical survey of Spain's "brickbat method of colonization, and the Inquisition technique of Christian persuasion"; and, a refreshingly candid admission of American mismanagement in the Philippines during the times of the earlier governors-general, none of whom she names.

Inevitably one must come to pity the Filipino—so says Mrs. Keith—for he is heir to three worlds:

As a good European he can love in the ruins, and live thrillingly in his moonlit moment, though the rest of his life is drab. As an Asian in Asia, he must fight to survive, but meanwhile he searches his soul, American-plan, for perfection, and imports the outer wrappings of the U.S.A. with Rotary, Lions Club, Kiwanis, radio, TV, pep talks, movies, cokes, beebop, newsprint, slang and big business, and wonders why it's not the same.

In the author's estimation, the reason why it's not the same is largely social. The Spanish centuries left American administrators a legacy of maldistributed property, and the Americans in turn passed up their opportunity to do something about the situation early this century. Instead they mollicoddled the rich descendants of royal favorites, and today doe-eyed women pay as high as \$2,000 (U.S.) per Paris gown per party, their coiffured poodles sport rhine-stone collars, absentee *hacenderos* live in marble palaces, while the common people—eighteen million of them—must “work for wages they cannot live on because anything is better than nothing.” Except for a little exaggeration here and there, this is an accurate estimate of the local social picture. Furthermore, Mrs. Keith points out that some work is being done to remedy this: there has been a bit of social legislation, but most important of all (in her view) is the Philippine President's realistic attempt at solving the Huk problem with such land distribution projects as Mindanao's EDCOR.

A very charming quality of the author is her ability to discuss the problems of her “barrio neighbors” without needless condescension and it is her contact with these “children of the ash covered loam” that enables her to portray them warmly. It is also through them that she gains certain insights concerning the Philippines and the Filipino. For instance, there is poignancy in her appreciation of the Filipino who tries and tries and never succeeds. He has given himself an American model, perhaps he has even read a Horatio Alger story or two, and so he says goodbye to the farm, he goes to college in Manila, and he is ready to conquer the world. Here is where the disappointment comes in—for the Philippines is not America and the opportunities that bridged the gap from rags to riches in the Alger story are nowhere to be found. There is no world to conquer.

But the Filipino has learned well to take all such disappointments in stride. For four hundred years now he has been

continually at the short end of things. The result, says Mrs. Keith, is that the Filipino is not really happy unless he has something to be unhappy about. For proof, Mrs. Keith presents her servant Edmundo. Her views are corroborated by her servant Luz.

Another interesting point that Mrs. Keith makes is that the Filipino of the barrios is not quite ready for the sophistication of democracy. He shows little reliance upon the law and he resents the idea that there is no basic difference in dignity between the "haves" and the "have-nots." As authority for this observation Mrs. Keith offers her washerwoman who goes by the improbable name Lavandera and no other.

It occurs to us that Mrs. Keith is speaking of a specific type of Filipino when she makes these remarks. Just how representative of the whole population this Filipino is, she does not bother to explain. And one cannot altogether blame her for not bothering to: who, after all, is *the Filipino*? Is it the sensitive artist, the efficient NBI man or the Ambassador whose "diplomatic career was begun by speaking beautiful English"? Or is it the hardworking fisherman at the barrio who is passionate even in his resignation? Is it the underpaid policeman who must make a fast buck and thus undermine everybody's confidence in the law enforcing agencies of the country? Or is it Luz and Berting and Edmundo and Lavandera? Is it the Igorot the Stateside notoriety of whose costume is the perpetual embarrassment of the lowlander? All these are Filipino, but the Filipino is not all of these and it must cause the foreigner no little puzzlement at sight of so kaleidescopic a culture pattern. No wonder it is necessary to fall back on husband Harry and son George to support the general structure of the book!

Mrs. Keith seems unfair in her treatment of Filipino Catholics. There is much sniping at the religion of the Filipinos. Her husband is made to observe that the Philippine brand of Catholicism is dangerously close to idolatry; she makes an indelicate remark about Filipino women who pray to Our Lady of Lourdes for fecundity; she accuses some Baguio religious of refusing shelter to her and maid Luz during an air raid; and she mouths the standard phrases about the Spanish missionary effort. Unintentionally, however, she stumbles upon the truly Christian character of the people and she is compelled to report that "miracles, like typhoons, come often in the Philippines" and that things get done or do not

get done because God has been or has not been good! We like to think that this is her way of saying that in the Philippines the heart knows more than the reason can prove—and that, what is more, that heart is essentially a God-fearing, God-loving heart. For it is upon this very heart that Mrs. Keith bases her hopes for the future of the Philippines.

ANTONIO G. MANUUD