

SNOW WHITE

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There is snow in Kashmir. The countryside lies under a white blanket ; fields and mountains, trees and houses all wearing a mantle of snowy white.

It's thrilling to walk across a field of freshly fallen snow. There it lies before you, crisp, smooth, glistening in the morning sun. And as you walk across it there's that delicious crunch, crunch, crunch ; and you look behind to see a line of footprints stretching back, making your progress.

The New Year lies before us like a clean, fresh field of snow ; clean, unmarked and inviting. But behind is 1974. Just take a look at it, churned up, criss-crossed with tracks, some straight and others devious, muddy patches, patches you would rather leave behind.

Of that, of course, we have no choice. It has already been left behind. It has now become history—recent though it be. But there is some reason to stand still for a moment and to look at the previous year. If you have a diary, look at some of the journeys you have made, recollect the functions you have attended. Have there been successes—or reverses ? Pick out your tracks in 1974. There are some stretches which you remember with pleasure. There the tracks are straight and clear. Some show how obstacles were safely surmounted and pitfalls avoided. But there are those patches which even now we remember with distaste, happenings we could rather have avoided, people we would rather not have met, words we wished we had not used.

We can learn from 1974. It may be a different year, but it is the same 'us'. The same type of situation may well occur again, and this time we can be wiser, we can refuse the compromising decision, we can choose our friends wisely, we can speak more boldly and more tactfully.

But what about the past ? The past that's still with us ; the mud that is slinging to our shoes. Is it possible to clean that off and start afresh on the stretch of clean snow before us ? Would it were so easy as cleaning a pair of shoes ! But it's not the mud on the outside which disturbs us. It is the soiled self within that clogs our feet and distorts our progress.

If I could only go to God at the start of this New Year and say to Him "Give me a cleansed and renewed life, O Lord. As earthly fathers forgive their children for mistakes and tempers, forgive me ; and correct me. Breathe a new spirit within for this new year, even your very own Spirit ; for deeper consciousness of your way, renewed impetus for achieving the right aims, and the ability to walk in faith, and walking be at rest."

It was Rabindranath Tagore who spoke of standing each day before the Lord, the Lord of all the worlds, in silence and face to face. The poet reflected that in this His world of business and hurry, with days full of work and effort among the crowds who scurry on, we each stand face to face with God. And at the end (perhaps we may add : 'when the field of 1975 is crossed') and when our work in this world is complete, even then, alone and silent, we shall stand before Him face to face.

It was one of the ancient prophets that Paul of Tarsus quoted when he wrote : "As I live, says the Lord,

every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God."

and added : "So each of us shall give account of himself to God."

And with these thoughts in mind, it's time to face about and head across this new fresh year that God is giving us—one day at a time.