

Wm. R. Rose

THE GOOD NEWS.

A SEMI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL:

DEVOTED to the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of the OLD AND YOUNG

SELF-IGNORANCE.

BY THE REV. JOHN CAIRD, D.D., GLASGOW.

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—PSALM xix. 12.

Of all kinds of ignorance, that which is the most strange, and, in so far as it is voluntary, the most culpable, is our ignorance of Self. For not only is the subject, in this case, that which might be expected to possess for us the greatest interest, but it is the one concerning which we have amplest facilities and opportunities of information. Who of us would not think it a strange and unaccountable story, could it be told of any man now present, that for years he had harboured under his roof a guest whose face he had never seen—a constant inmate of his home, who was yet to him altogether unknown? It is no supposition, however, but an unquestionable fact, that to not a few of us, from the first moment of existence, there has been present, not beneath the roof, but within the breast, a mysterious resident, an inseparable companion, nearer to us than friend or brother, yet of whom, after all, we know little or nothing. What man of intelligence amongst us would not be ashamed to have had in his possession for years some rare or universally admired volume with its leaves uncut?—or to be the proprietor of a repository, filled with the most exquisite productions of genius, and the rarest specimens in science and art, which yet he himself never thought of entering? Yet surely no book so worthy of perusal, no chamber containing objects of study so curious, so replete with interest for us, as that which seldom or never attracts our

observation—the book, the chamber of our own hearts. We sometimes reproach with folly those persons who have travelled far, and seen much of distant countries, and yet have been content to remain comparatively unacquainted with their own. But how venial such folly compared with that of ranging over all other departments of knowledge, going abroad with perpetual inquisitiveness over earth and sea and sky, in search of information, whilst there is a little world within the breast which is still to us an unexplored region. Other scenes and objects we can study only at intervals; they are not always accessible, or can be reached only by long and laborious journeys; but the bridge of consciousness is soon crossed; we have but to close the eye and withdraw the thoughts from the world without, in order at any moment to wander through the scenes and explore the phenomena of the more wondrous world within. To examine other objects, delicate and elaborate instruments are often necessary; the researches of the astronomer, the botanist, the chemist, can be prosecuted only by means of rare and costly apparatus; but the power of reflection, that faculty more wondrous than any mechanism which art has ever fashioned, is an instrument possessed by all; the poorest and most illiterate, alike with the most cultured and refined, have at their command an apparatus by which to sweep the inner firmament of the soul, and bring into view its manifold