

THE

# GOOD NEWS.

A SEMI-MONTHLY PERIODICAL:

DEVOTED to the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of the OLD AND YOUNG

## THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN.

ACTS XXVI.

BY THE REV. PETER GRAY, MINISTER OF CHALMERS' CHURCH, KINGSTON.

There is not, in all human language, a sentence more replete with true benevolence, nor an expression more eloquent than the answer of Paul to King Agrippa, when the latter, after listening to the interesting narrative and earnest pleading of the great Apostle said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian:" and Paul replied, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Let us first look upon the group presented to us by the narrative, and think:

I. There was a King, whose rank was very nominal indeed, a king by the grace of imperial Rome, a puppet labelled with a high-sounding title, and draped in a purple robe,—but who still had such authority and power as made him an object of fear or flattery to those subjected to his rule. There was a Roman Governor, placed under authority too, but exercising all the real power in the Province. And there were Chief Captains, and the principal men of Caesarea, Jews in the retinue of Agrippa, and Roman guards perhaps from every country under heaven.

One at least in that assembly so understood and felt the force of the Apostle's argument, as to be almost persuaded to be a Christian. Another, whose knowledge had probably been acquired more in the camp than the school, expressed with military frankness his serious conviction,

that Paul was "beside" himself—that "much learning" had made him "mad!" The polished Greeks, courtiers, and learned and wealthy men of the world, surprised and delighted with the speaker's eloquence, were yet too clever to believe much in anything. The narrow-minded countrymen of the Apostle, who thought that God's sole regard was fixed on Abraham and his posterity, and were quite sure that they were the special favorites of heaven, would doubtless listen with angry impatience to the intrepid advocate of the cause of the Nazarene, all ready, if they durst, to curse the name of Jesus, and wreak their vengeance on His servant.—And the rude soldiers, who believed in the god of every temple they approached, and lived as if there were no God at all, perhaps as they looked on the unwonted scene, and admired the boldness and fervor of the Apostle, wondered at what could be the meaning of all this; perhaps some of them too were almost persuaded to be Christians.

There they were, high and low, learned and unlearned, Jew and Gentile, the world of that age in epitome. To them was the Gospel preached. "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." And beside them was the unseen God, in whose hands was the breath of their nostrils; God, marking all their thoughts, as His messenger made Him known, and implored