

THE COST OF BECOMING A CHRISTIAN IN INDIA.

By Rev. J. C. Perkins.

YOU doubtless know but little about the system of caste which is so prevalent and powerful throughout this country. It is very cruel and heartless, and will yield to no persuasion or influence. When outcasts or low-

caste people embrace Christianity they make little or no opposition. The low castes are considered on the level of brutes, and it matters little what they do or where they go. But when one from the high castes thinks of confessing Christ the whole caste, and I may say the whole community, rises and puts forth every effort to retain him in Hinduism.

The Bible woman's work has been greatly blessed lately, and a number of high-caste women have come out from Hinduism and become Christians in spite of the opposition, fierce and oftentimes cruel, of their associates. I had an interesting case last week which may interest you and give you a little insight into what it costs some people to say that Jesus Christ is Lord and God.

A woman in this place has been for some time a firm believer in our Lord, and has been allowed by her husband to attend our church. She was such a good woman and so faithful in all her home duties that her husband, who loved her and trusted her, did not seem to realize what he was permitting when he made no objection to her attending worship with the Christians. Time went on, and finally it was reported that she was influencing her husband, and it became very likely that she would be able to induce him to come with her to Christianity. The pastor was called away last week on some important business, and wrote a letter to me, saying that the woman was fairly pressing us to baptize her, and as she was so urgent, asked if I would not consider the matter and baptize her on the coming Sabbath. We had no doubt of the woman's faith nor of her fitness to join the church. The question was how much of a row would occur, and how much she could endure of the persecution that was sure to come after her baptism.

The Hindus are very curious in one respect, namely, that they allow their people to say that Christ is God, that the Christian religion is true, that their own religion is false, provided that the person is not baptized. Bap-

tism is the rite that separates them from Hinduism, and until that takes place they are as a rule indifferent to what their relatives say about Christianity.

Last week there was a wedding among the relatives of this woman, and many members of the caste came from different towns and villages to attend the wedding. In some way it leaked out that our friend was thinking of being baptized. Immediately there was the greatest disturbance among them, and they called the husband and told him he had been a fool to have allowed this thing to have gone on so long, and that he must take active steps in the matter, or both he and his wife would be put out of caste and be subjected to severe punishment. Between their threats and their inducements the husband was completely won over, and he agreed to carry out the advice of the head men of his caste; namely, to take all his wife's jewels from her, beat her, and take a sickle, heat it red hot, and brand her in two or three places. The man returned to his wife and told her what was in store for her. She answered, "I love you and you may take my jewels if you wish or anything else, but I must be a Christian." He did nothing at the time, but assured her that if she was baptized the above would happen to her. Last Saturday night the Bible woman came to my office and told me that, notwithstanding all the opposition, the woman wanted me to baptize her the next day. I was in a great quandary as to what to do. I knew the people would do nothing to me even though there was a riot, but I trembled for the woman, and felt that I could not bring all this suffering upon her when I could not defend her. So after much thought and no little anxiety, I told the Bible woman to tell her to wait till the pastor returned, and we would carefully consider and see if there is not a way whereby she could become a Christian and not suffer so much. I could have spirited her away by night to some remote town, and under the care of other missionaries she would in all probability have been safe, and this is what she urged, provided her husband cast her off. But I did not think it right to cause such a break between two persons who really loved each other. Such an act greatly infuriates the Hindu community and closes the doors of many houses to which we have access. I know the priceless value of a human soul, and I am ready and willing to go any lengths to win it for Christ, but in this