

## Our Work Abroad.

Dear readers of the Link :—

You read about many very sad things in India, but I am going to tell you about another that made my heart sick.

Down here in our village is a little wayside temple where the village goddess, Veeramma resides. She is a little goddess, about two feet high, and is painted in red and green and gay colors and at her right is her husband. She is set up in a little tiny room, without any light or ventilation, and when we went in to see her, the mud floor was wet and sticky, and the air was hot and steamy and smoky from the burning of the candles.

They tell this story about how she became a goddess. Some one hundred or more years ago a woman of the Shepherd caste lived in Vuyyuru. She was a pure woman and refused to be led astray by a Brahman priest, who wanted to make her fall into sin. When her husband died, she was in another village and so could not be burned with him, but she had a fire built in her own village and jumped into it and died. So they made her a goddess because she refused to be an adulteress, and they built a little temple for her just at the entrance to the village.

Once every year childless women came from all the country for miles around to worship her, and beg a child of her. Miss McLaurin and I went down the day after full moon. We saw about thirty women prostrated before the idol, while crowds of people were coming and going "to see" and men with drums were marching around the temple, escorting each

woman around a certain number of times before she prostrated herself. One man with a drum followed us around everywhere, banging away in our ears. Perhaps he thought we too, had come to worship.

Each woman before she prostrated herself, took a bath in the cold water of the tank near by. She wore only one scanty cloth, wrapped about her body, and let her hair fall about her shoulders. As she came up dripping wet and shivering with cold (you know it is our cold season here in February) her relatives daubed her face and hands all over with yellow powder, and sprinkled her wetquaca with yellow and red powder, used in worship. Then they filled her hands full of fruits and flowers and marched her around the temple, banging away on the drums with the idea of calling the attention of the goddess, I suppose, lest she should not notice that a new person was prostrating herself.

Each woman lay like a corpse, still and stiff, lying flat on the ground, with her hands grasping the offering of fruit and flowers stretched straight above her head, and her every muscle stiff. Those inside the temple, in the first open court and those outside on the shaded side of the wall, shivered with the cold, but their relatives kept throwing more cold water and powder over them. At each woman's head they burnt incense, on a little dish of coal.

These women lay thus for hours, supposedly with their minds fixed upon the goddess, so that they were unconscious of any bodily discomfort. Each one lay thus until she received a vision of the goddess appearing and handing her some token, such as a fruit or flower as a sign of having received favour in her sight.

On the last day of the feast, they attached a basket to a tall palm tree and elevated in it everyone who, during the year, had made any vow to the goddess, and had received his or her request. For instance, those wo-