

THE ONE epic which never becomes stale even if one hears or reads it a million times is the *Ramayana*. It has been so through ages and will continue to engross human attention till eternity. Its universal appeal, whether as a bed-time story of the children, or as a mature philosophy for the scholar, has been irresistible. Versions in Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam have enriched the literature of these languages for centuries. Now, Sri R. K. Narayan, the master of mellifluous prose, has come out with his English version of the great epic in his own inimitable style and treatment based on Kamban's work, mainly for Western readers and also for those in India whose mother-tongue is not Tamil and therefore cannot enjoy it in full. The great Tamil poet, Kamban, did not translate Valmiki *Ramayana* into Tamil but composed his verse in luscious language full of rich imagery and telling similes. Sri R. K. Narayan has imbibed the spirit of Kamban's monumental work and transmitted the highlights of the story in an enchanting manner to the readers. The SWARAJYA is grateful to the

On Men & Matters

—R. V.

author for permission to serialize his modern prose version of the *Ramayana* in its issues for the benefit of its readers beginning from next week.

CIVILIZED SOCIETY throughout the world will heave a sigh of relief on the grant of reprieve from the jaws of death to Prof. Dennis Hills by the authoritarian President Idi Amin of Uganda. For describing, in an unpublished manuscript, President Idi Amin as a "village tyrant", which, considering the harassment meted out to the Asians, the British and the local population, is a gross understatement, the fury of the Fuhrer was unleashed and a death penalty by firing squad was awarded to

the poor teacher. The very severity of the punishment shows what scant respect dictators have for human life and human dignity. Even the neighbouring States like Egypt and Sudan were so shocked by the arbitrariness of the action that they tried to dissuade the great dictator but without avail. Many African States, still dependent on aid from the developed countries, were greatly worried over the repercussions of the senseless action of the Ugandan dictator, but could do nothing to change him. Ultimately, the British Foreign Secretary had himself to go and meet the intransigent President for a discussion. It is not known what transpired at the meeting but one good result was that Prof. Hills was released and allowed to go back home. Though the African nations had a background of British or French democratic institutions before independence, many of them have lapsed into single-party governments and naked dictatorships. It only proves that the delicate and exotic plant, democracy, has not taken root anywhere in Asia or Africa and even where it did, has withered, ere long.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR :

OVERTIME ALLOWANCES

Sir,—The Union Finance Minister is reported to have told the press in Bombay that a Class IV employee in a public sector institution drew in a month Rs 3,808, of which Rs 2,948 was "Overtime allowance". He also stated that a Class III employee took home Rs 4,720, of which Rs 2,858 was for "Overtime work".

These revelations make three things clear. First, there is no sense of proportion in the way employees in the public sector concerns are remunerated. Secondly, the "overtime", workers do not do any work during working hours in order to claim overtime work. And thirdly, this is one of the main reasons why the public sector concerns work at a loss.

V. T. SREENIVASAN
Bangalore (Retd., Accountant-General)

"TASK OF THE POLICE AND THE ARMY"

Sir,—In the course of an interview to the newspaper Editors on July 9, the

Prime Minister is reported to have observed . . . : "The press should have said something against the call to the Army and Police to revolt. There was no paper which raised its voice against it." (*Vide The Hindu*, 10th July 1975, page 7, col. 1).

It has to be pointed out that the SWARAJYA in its issue of 21st June 1975, published an article by me entitled, "The Task of the Police and the Army", which disapproved any indiscriminate call to these forces to disobey. The Press Information Service has probably not noticed the article.

Madras N. MURUGESA MUDALIAR

"THE UNFAILING SENTINEL"

Sir,—It is exhilarating to go through the articles entitled, "The Unfailing Sentinel" and "The Youthful Octogenarian", in the SWARAJYA of July 12. The tributes paid to Mr K. Santhanam therein are just and unexceptionable. The traditions of integrity and high morals upheld by Rajaji and Mr

Santhanam in public life bring to my mind the Gandhian Era and the galaxy of patriotic stalwarts—Lokamanya Balagangadhar Tilak, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vithalbhai Patel, Vallabhbhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad . . . When I look back upon the men of the Freedom-struggle days and compare them with those of 'today', I stand appalled and grief-stricken at the contrast.

More glaring than the fall in the mental powers and attainments is the moral depravity to which politicians have succumbed. How justice and fair-play are sacrificed at the altar of 'popular democracy' and to what abject level politicians stoop to wangle the votes of the uninformed masses? Is it for this that we yearned for 'Swaraj'? Are the counsels of brilliant elder statesmen of the calibre of Mr Santhanam sought to solve the knotty problems—political and economic? You are cent per cent correct in your conviction that "If the sagacious advice of eminent men like Mr Santhanam is not sought, they (Mr Santhanam and others) are not the losers."

People who have still patriotism left in them and who are unbiased in their judgment of men and matters are only