ES to the NEWS

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It is fortunate that equal employment quotas have never been enforced on the writing business, because world opinion has cheer fully enjoyed a persistent discrimination by book publishers in favor of one elderly woman who died recently at the age of 85.

More people have read the books of Agatha Christie than any author of our era. She wrote more than 80 books that have sold 400 million copies in 103 countries. Translations of her books have surpassed those of every other writer in history, including Shakes peare. She totally dominated the detective story business.

Agatha Christie's play, "The Mousetrap," is the most successful and longest-running play in history. .I must confess that I, like the other playgoers who have seen it in London during its 24 years of continuous performance there, found it an absorbing mystery. It has been performed in 41 countries and translated into 22 languages.

Miss Christie gave the royalty to "The Mousetrap" to her grand son, Matthew Pritchard, in 1952 when he was twelve years old. Now a farmer in his thirties, he automatically gets about $60 every time the curtain goes up. The London production passed its 9,645th performance this week. Another of her plays currently running in London, "Murder at the Vicarage," recently passed its 200th performance.

The movie made of the book Agatha Christie wrote 40 years ago, "Murder on the Orient Express," has already grossed $40 million and

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is still going strong. *A* successor, "Evil Under the Sun," will be filmed this year with an all-star cast and should produce an other fortune.

Her last book, "Curtain," is leading the best-seller lists in the United States and England, and its publishers confidently anticipate a sale of three million copies. Her publishers say that "Murder on the Orient Express" has accelerated global sales of all her books by introducing a new generation of readers to her famous detective Hercule Poirot.

Because of the wa Agatha Christie gave away her royalty rights to various relatives, friends and charities, no one will ever know how much money she made, but it is estimated to be in the tens of millions of dollars and there is no end in sight. Despite her gifts, at one time she was said to have had a personal income of $200,000 per year.

In recent years, Miss Christie wrote only one book per year be cause she said that, if she wrote more, she would just "enlarge the finances of Internal Revenue, who would spend it mostly on idiotic things."

How could this plain, small, shy English woman create the ideas and develop the talent that made her the wealthiest writer in the world? She said she thought up the plots of her mysteries while she was washing the dishes.

Agatha Christi·e' s incredible success reminds us that life is most productive and satisfying for all when rewards are given purely on merit, without regard to race, religion, gender, or age. She is also proof that, in an era when many people want to stop working at age 65, a person can be original, creative, and highly successful up to the age of 85.

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