

Counting Pages

Column by Aart Deddens¹

Many professional writers worry and struggle. They don't count their blessings so much as the number of pages. The harvest is usually² disappointing. Jessica Durlacher, for example, lamented years ago that she did only two pages per day; three on a very good day. When she did occasionally have a good day—and you won't believe this—her husband Leon de Winter had done five! And on top of that, Leon had done some useful things, like housekeeping duties.

From where that dazed concern with numbering pages? Why don't writers produce meaningful sentences or striking metaphors? If I were a writer and my publishers would ask me the state of my manuscript, I would say, "I am at -4 and cannot yet make predictions. I have yet to complete the outline and you never know what will happen during that process.

Kok, let me do some calculations

All these professional writers that count pages should take Abraham Kuyper as an example. For him writing was a secondary occupation. Publisher J. H. Kok wrote in a letter to Kuyper's daughter after the latter's death in 1920 about the publication of the two-volume work *Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde*:

It was in the spring of 1915 that your father summoned me to discuss this book. He told me he had done a lot of special studies for this voluminous tome and had even purchased a small library for it. After we had agreed on the size of the book and its appearance, I asked when he thought he might complete the last part of it.

"Let me figure this out a moment, Kok," he answered. Your father took a pencil and paper and, mumbling quietly to himself, he first calculated the many hours he could devote to it on different days. I heard him say, "So many on Mondays; so many on Tuesdays; so many.... That comes to a total of so many per week. The entire work will take up so many pages. I can

¹ Trans. Jan H. Boer. Original title: "Pagina's tellen." A marginal column by editor Aart Deddens, ed., of the Kuyper Centennial edition of *Sophie*, p. 47.

² Deddens uses "altijd" or "always." That I consider an overstatement. And thus use "usually."

write so many pages per hour, which comes to.... And after some further calculations your father suddenly declared, "Barring unforeseen circumstances, I can have the last copy ready in December 1916. Alright, you figure it out, Kok." And it literally happened exactly as he had predicted. Like clockwork, it appeared right on the dot!