

## Sir Philip Sidney

Have you ever been to Holland in the Netherlands? If you go one day, look out for a special house. It is in the Bakkerstraat in Arnhem. In front of the house there is some writing on the ground. It says:

In this house died on the 17 October 1586 Sir Philip Sidney, English poet, diplomat and soldier, from his wounds suffered at the battle of Zutphen. He gave his life for our freedom.



Who was Sir Philip Sidney? What was he doing in the Netherlands? How did he die?

Sir Philip Sydney (1554-1586) was a poet. He was a great soldier. “He was a courtier of Queen Elizabeth I. He was so handsome, and brave and kind that every one loved him. Queen, statesmen and people, soldiers, courtiers and poets, all loved him. He lived well, wrote well, fought well, and died well.”<sup>1</sup>

At the time the Netherlands were ruled by Spain. The Netherlanders – the Dutch – were fighting against Spain. They wanted to rule themselves. At first the Dutch only wanted the Spanish to be fair. They wanted to pay less tax. They wanted the Spanish army not to hurt them. They wanted to be free to worship God without being called “heretics.” For the Spanish put “heretics” to death. But as time went on the Dutch began to change their ideas. They began to want complete freedom from Spain.

“Who will help us fight the Spanish?” asked the Dutch. They asked Elizabeth I of England to help.

Elizabeth sent the Dutch some help. She sent soldiers. Later, she sent Sir Philip Sidney. He was sent to be governor of a Dutch town called Flushing. He was sent because he was a good soldier. He could help the Dutch fight the Spanish. Sir Philip did not like the Spanish. He did not like them because they were cruel to Christians

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1 H E Marshall, *Our Island Story*.

like the Dutch, calling them “heretics.” He was a “heretic” himself – according to the Spanish. For years he had wanted Elizabeth to attack Spain.



Things did not always go well with the English soldiers in the Netherlands. There was a battle at a place called Zutphen. You can see Zutphen in the picture. Prince Alexander of Parma was the Spanish leader. The Earl of Leicester was the English leader. The Spanish had a line of waggons full of food. They were trying to get them into Zutphen. The English were trying to stop them.

The Earl of Leicester could not stop the Spanish. Many of his soldiers were killed. One of them was Sir Philip Sydney.

“Wounded and groaning with pain, he asked for a cup of water. While it was being brought, he noticed a soldier lying beside him in great agony. 'Give it to him,' he said, pointing to this poor soldier. The man refused to have it. “Nay, but take it,” said Sir Philip, “you need it more than I do.”

Sir Philip never recovered from his wound. A fortnight later he died; still young, brave and handsome.”<sup>2</sup>

A stone marks the spot where he fell. On it it says, “Thy necessity is yet greater than mine,” which means, “you need it more than I do.”<sup>3</sup>



Our Dutch friends have not forgotten Sir Philip: we should not forget him either.

<sup>2</sup> *HE Marshall, Our Island Story.*

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