Dutch black-letter ballads of
the seventeenth century

In two previous articles in this journal I have drawn attention to a number of black-letter broadside ballads not included in Kossmann’s inventory. In all, the total number of broadside ballads in black letter described up to now is six complete sheets for the sixteenth century and five for the seventeenth century. To this total should be added a number of fragments. It may be useful to repeat here that only the so-called popular broadsides have been included in my search. In its restricted meaning this is a broadside of miscellaneous content.

In the present article two more complete sheets are added, together with sixteen fragments. All of them are preserved in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague. All the fragments are found in a miscellaneous made-up volume about which Kossmann announced in 1926 that he hoped to give a description of it soon. The volume, shelf-mark 582 A 55, was indeed referred to by him in the next year and on that occasion he printed one song from it (No. XI below). A detailed analysis of the fragments of popular broadsides found in it was never given and it is the purpose of the present article to fill this lacuna.

The volume in which the fragments are found consists of 45 songs, no fewer than 29 of which are ignored in the present list, because they are not found on fragments which look like parts of popular broadsides. The items omitted include occasional pieces such as three New Year songs by Amsterdam poets for 1618, several poems by Spieghel and many poems on the religious controversies of the early seventeenth century. One complete popular broadside has been omitted because in all probability it was printed in the eighteenth century.

The fragments listed below have been arranged in chronological order, as
have the two complete broadsides. The latter were acquired by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek during the Second World War and have remained unidentified to the present day.

I

No. 3 of the collection is a fragment of a sheet (30.4 by 14 cm.) containing two columns of text. Since it has a large left margin and practically no right margin, it may safely be held to be the left third of a broadsheet printed breadthwise. It bears neither date nor printer's address, but according to the indexing-card in the K.B. it should be dated about 1600.

Above both columns there is a woodcut (9.2 by 5.7 cm.) with right and left an ornamental woodcut placed vertically. It depicts Jephthah at the head of his army, returning home after his victory against the Ammonites and being welcomed by his daughter and three servants.

The title of the song also occupies the full width of both columns: Een Schriftueerlijck Liedeken van Jephtah.

Incipit: Iephtah een strijtbær Held vermaert
  Van een Hoere ghebaert
  Was Gillads sone maer kreegh daer na

This song of nineteen six-line stanzas is sung to the tune of 'Roosekens in den Mey'. It may be the same as that mentioned by Wieder as beginning 'Jephta kloeck/ een strijdtbaer Heldt'. The song is also found in De Gulden Harpe where its author is said to be Carel van Mander (1548-1606).

The song tells the biblical story of Jephthah's victorious campaign against the Ammonites. He promised God that if he won, he would sacrifice the first creature to meet him on his return home. This turns out to be his only daughter, who willingly submits to the sacrifice.

II

No. 2 is the right half (30.5 by 20.5 cm.) of a sheet which was printed breadthwise and, when complete, no doubt had the usual six columns. The fragment still has three columns. The first two contain one song and the third a second.

Columns 1 and 2: Een Gheestelijck Liedeken

Incipit: Ioanais sprack met woorden soet
  So in Mattheo drie staet geschreven
  Gaet doet oprechte vruchten der boet

6 F.C. Wieder, De Schriftuurlijke Liedekens. Inhoudsbeschrijving en Bibliographie ('s-Gravenhage 1900), Index.
7 Haarlem 1607, p. 309.