



Abb. 2
Ludwig
Sütterlin
1896



Posters from the
collection
Dr. Hans Sachs,
Berlin W 62

Abb. 3
Edmund
Edel
1896

DR. HANS SACHS
THE ARTISTIC AND IDEAL VALUE OF A
COLLECTION OF POSTERS

IN this and the following essay, an attempt will be made to give a rough outline of the historical development of the artistic German poster and of its artistic and cultural significance from its birth in the year 1896 up to the present day. It cannot be other than a rough outline, because the space at our disposal allows only of passing allusions which will often be comprehensible only to those who have experienced these three and a half decades. It is not as if the development of the artistic German poster could be traced without further ado from the prevailing art style in the year of its birth. The main purpose of the poster being mercantile propaganda, the means given into the artist's hand were often dictated by commercial considerations and thus the path of the poster during these years is winding and involved. It often led into regions of the purely abstract or esthetic, then again it accompanied the commercial fashion of the moment, or followed the eternal variations of public opinion. Just as the rhythm and speed of our day swings to the beat of the eight-cylinder car and the machine, so there was once a cultural epoch of l'art nouveau, the "Jugend Stil", of the Hunger Blockade, of the Revolution. The styles and fashions of the people, their clothes, their will to art, the rhythms of their music all form themselves out of the changing

destinies of the entire nation. The poster did not remain immune from these influences and mirrored faithfully all the phases of sociological and artistic transformation: the stuffy philistinism of the nineties, the new forces of the awakening twentieth century pushing towards the light, the esthetic snobism of the pre-war years, the swollen hypocrisy of war-time, the misery and lack of discipline in the inflation period, the sober awakening and the hindrances and poverty that attended the attempts to build up anew.

It would be a tempting task to attempt to trace the influences which affected the artistic poster in Germany and other lands, to note what impressions it received from the prevailing fashions and art movements, from the economic situation and from national and psychological factors, and finally how far national peculiarities are beginning to fade out in the artistic poster as in art in general, as the peoples once more begin to draw nearer and nearer together.

Thus a collection of these documents of the mercantile urge to propaganda and the artist's readiness to assist is inspiring in many ways, affords an insight into sociological conditions and the psychology of peoples, raises cultural historical and technical advertising problems as well as those of an economic and political nature and gives