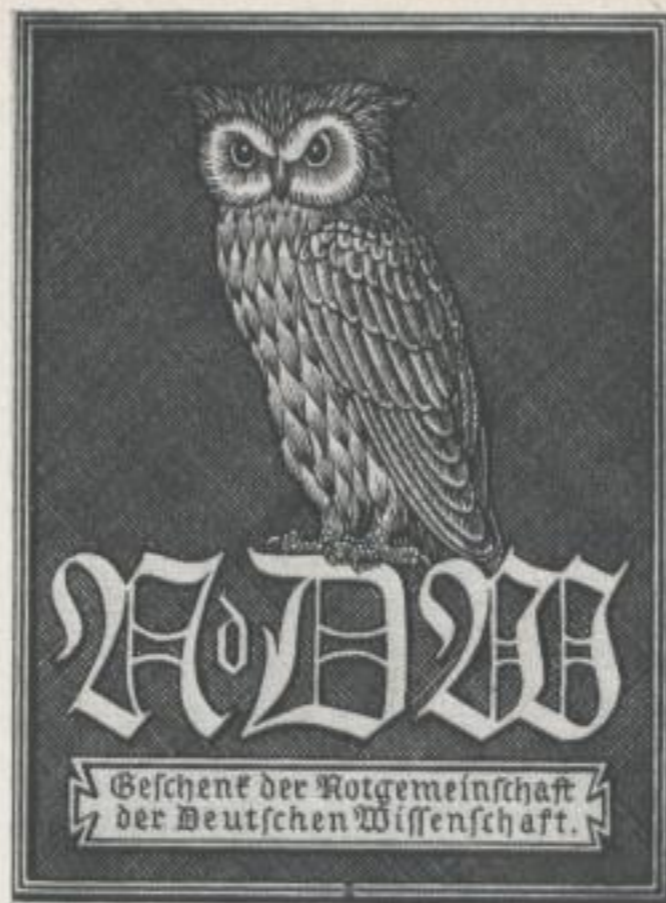


# LIBRIS



Prof.  
ERNST BÖHM

HÖLSCHER:

## THE MEANING OF EX-LIBRIS

The German art of ex-libris is at present in a very critical state. After the war, and even about ten years ago, there was a definite boom in the ex-libris market, and the artists were all fully occupied with dealing with the numerous orders they received. This period of an almost unprecedented boom has, however, been followed by slump which has already lasted for a long time, and the number of new ex-libris which have been produced in recent years is infinitesimal. This clearly recognizable decrease is not to be attributed solely to purely economic causes, for, strangely enough, the ex-librists themselves have caused further serious harm in their favourite sphere owing to their excessive and unsystematic passion for collecting. They developed an absolutely boundless ambition to fill their portfolios and bookcases with small graphic works of art by as famous masters as possible, and thus merely encouraged the appearance and inflationary growth of that type of ex-libris which is no longer a purely suitable design, but was merely artificially created for the purposes of collection and exchange. But they thus deprived the ex-libris of the real basis of its existence and the inevitable result was that sudden fictitious prosperity and over-saturation of the ex-libris market which seriously upset every true lover of this old and charming special domain of graphic creative work and which still offends us today. Nevertheless these disappointments by no means justify denying the ex-libris its present right to exist, as ill-disposed critics have already done on several occasions. All that is necessary is to realize once more perfectly clearly that a really useful ex-libris is neither merely something for collectors, nor a pretty article de luxe, nor even a work of art existing for its own sake, but that it must serve in the first place clearly to determine the ownership of a book, and is there-



Ten ex-libris by EDUARD SAUER