The Amateur
Winemaker

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From the Editor's Chair ...

"Gentlemen, will you please refrain from smoking until after the first two songs, so that those who wish to, may honour the Wine."
Toastmaster-Vintners Company

Having given up smoking a month ago, and now feeling rather smug at having survived that long without pipe or cigar, the above quotation is apt for me at the moment, and came strongly to mind on a couple of occasions this last month, both winemakers' dinners. Could we well adopt the practice at club dinners?

10 YEARS OLD

The first dinner, in Its way, was quite an event m the winemaking world, for it was that arranged to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the first-founded Circle, that at Andover. Andover was officially founded on 17 March, 1964 (although there had been meetings before that) and several other clubs. among them the Cheltenham and Welwyn Garden City ones, came into existence only very shortly afterwards. so presumably they will soon be likewise celebrating their decade. Andover made their dinner quite an occasion, and the club funds were raided to provide a half-bottle apiece of commercial table wine in addition to the excellent dessert wines produced by the members. It was a dinner with a difference, too, in that six people had a hand in the proposing of the main toast. To mark the occasion the Circle adopted the proud motto "Circulus Primus."

Looking back on those 10 years, it is astonishing how the winemaking movement has grown. Those early Circles, Clubs or Associations were very conscious of the fact that they were pioneers, and they did excellent work laying the foundations of the modern winemaking set-up. There were no rules or precedents to follow; everything had to be argued out as we went along; we had to clarify and set out our aims and objects, draw up a constitution, devise a club emblem, design club labels, decide how wine should be bottled and exhibited, draw up rules for showing and judging, find speakers, give talks ourselves, help other clubs even younger than ourselves. write pamphlets, collect recipes-all these jobs members of those early Circles did, and all Circles formed since have benefited. All the time we were learning more and more about wine and winemaking-as We still are! And what great fun it all was! Some of us will. I am sure always look back with some nostalgia to those early days of winemaking circles, and to those small beginnings of the great things to come. Today there are something like 190 Circles scattered all over the British Isles, and several in Canada. As will be seen from this issue, there is now even one in the Yukon. The "Amateur Winemaker" certainly goes to some surprising destinations every month, for it has readers not only in this country but in Ireland, North and South Rhodesia, South Africa, America, Canada. New Zealand, Australia, Malaya, Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, India. Iran and even Japan!

Editor: C. J. J. Berry,
North Croye, Croye Drive, The Avenue, Andover, Hants.
Tel.: Andover 3177.
Canadian Agents: Wine-Art, *p.a.* Box 2701, Vancouver 3, RC.
Semplex of Canada, Box 1343, Winnipeg, Manitoba. New Zealand
Agents: Brewers Trading Co. Ltd., *p.a.* Box 593. Christchurch. N.Z.

AT STAINES

The second dinner was also an anniversary one, the third, this time, of the Staines Circle. and a most enjoyable evening it was. But what winemakers' dinner isn't?

GUILD OF JUDGES

The Guild of Judges is making good progress with its initial task of drawing up a handbook upon which the future work of the Guild will be based. The handbook will include a complete procedure and set of instructions for judges, the Guild Constitution, specimen schedules for all sizes of competitive wine shows, and also details as to how any would-be judge can qualify for membership. since the whole idea of the Guild is gradually to build up a large· panel of reliable and experienced judges. Judging by letters reaching us there seems to be some misunderstanding of the aims and objects of the Guild, and of the intentions of those who launched it, and we have invited the Guild chairman, Mr. S. W. Andrews, to clarify matters in an article in a forthcoming issue of the magazine. Two points we can make clear here and now, however. First, there is no intention of restricting membership to those at present admitted-the inaugural meeting enlisted the help of current "National" judges just in order to have a firm base line from which to start and second, there is 110 intention of restricting membership or activity solely to the south. Further than that we will not go now, since Mr. Andrews will be dealing with the subject in more detail. Two subcommittees have already put in many weeks of careful work, discussion and writing in the preparation of the handbook, which should be ready by the end of the year. When the handbook is published. we think misunderstandings will be swept away, and certainly so once the Guild, in its second year, becomes fully operational. Until then, perhaps we should plead for a little more patience.

USEFUL LAMP

Through the good offices of Mrs. S. M. Tritton I have been sent a Bendalux lamp of a sort that she says she has found invaluable in her winery for racking purposes, and after trying it out I must agree. The feature of the lamp, which is made by Nigroid Ferns Ltd., of Kingswood, Bristol, is its flexible mounting, which can be bent into any position and will retain its shape. The lamp can thus be used as an ordinary desk lamp, as an inspection lamp, as a reading lamp for clipping on armchair or bed-head, or for any job requiring portable, adaptable illumination. It is certainly a handy piece of equipment.

THE "NATIONAL"

These notes, of course, are being written before the National Conference has taken place, although the magazine will be published after the event. Unfortunately the Conference falls at an awkward time in relation to our publishing schedule, and because of this we may not be able to cover it as fully as we would like in this issue. We intend giving the full list of prizewinners. however, as being the most important single item, and as much other information as we can in the space available. Any additional reports will be held over to the June issue.