

RANDOM THOUGHTS FOR THE BOOKSHELF

by Christopher Fielden

[Christopher Fielden, an honored member of the Circle of Wine Writers, Trustee of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, and a 45-year veteran of the British Wine Trade, has been a Wayward Tendril member since the society's founding in 1990. He celebrates our "joyous quarter century together." — Ed.]

Inspirations by Gérard-Philippe Mabillard. Editions Glénat, 2014. 128pp. 30 Swiss francs.

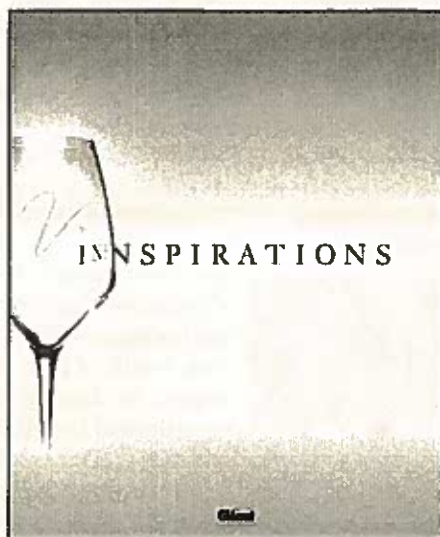
IN SOME WAYS MY FIRST BOOK is scarcely a book about wine. Some years ago, Christian Michellod, from Switzerland, visited Colombia and was distressed by the poverty he saw around him. As a result of this the *Moi Pour Toi* Foundation came into being. In 2012, he spoke of his work to Gérard-Philippe Mabillard, a leading figure in the Swiss wine industry. From this conversation came the idea for *Inspirations*, a collection of fifty-six photographs either taken by a well-known photographer or inspired by a well-known personality: a musician, an actor, a designer, or an artist. What all these photographs have in common is that they feature a glass of wine; not just any wine, but a glass of Valais wine from Switzerland. Each photograph is accompanied by a text, in French and English, about the personality. It appears that sales of the book have already raised more than a million Swiss francs for this worthy cause.

Les Parfums du Vin – Sentir et Comprendre le Vin by Richard Pfister. Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 2013. 255pp. 25 euros.

Richard Pfister comes from a Swiss wine family and spent years as a winemaker. For the past few years, however, he has worked as a perfumer. In *Les Parfums du Vin* he has distilled together what he has learnt in both of these fields. Hugh Johnson in his preface describes this work as the biggest advance in the field of the science of wine-tasting since Ann Noble's creation of the tasting wine-wheel at the University of California in the 1980s. What he presents is a classification he calls *oenoflair*, which divides smells into a number of groups where the dominant flavour might be spicy, floral, animal, woody, lactic, *empyreumatique* (having undergone cooking or torrefaction), fruity, vegetal and mineral. There is a separate section for wine-faults. Again these groups are subdivided, with fruits, for

example, falling into five different families. Again the principal elements that go to create each flavour are given; for example, caramel consists of furfural, maltol and cyclotene. Having been present at a wine-tasting presented by M. Pfister, I can vouch for the extent that he has developed the science of tasting. This book, I would recommend to any analytical (French-reading) wine-taster, though I admit it left me somewhat behind!

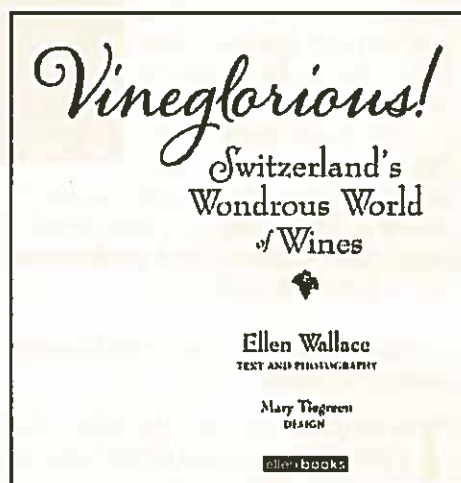
Vineglorious! – Switzerland's Wondrous World of Wines by Ellen Wallace. Saint Prex: Ellen Books, 2014. 139pp. Further details from: www.ellen-books.com.



THIS is the first book in English about the wines of Switzerland for more than twenty years. The author, Ellen Wallace, an American journalist who has lived and worked in Geneva for almost thirty years, says that she does not want it to be a textbook, but rather an introduction to the wines of the country she has made her home. Given that less than two bottles in a hundred of Swiss wine make their way out of the country, it is aimed firmly at the tourist and the expatriate. It is written in a light and easy style and it is a book to dip into, for it is largely a miscellany of anecdotes and stories about individual wines, villages and producers. As there is no index, it is not a ready reference book, but where it is

very helpful is with descriptions of the legion of grape varieties that appear to be still grown in Switzerland and nowhere else in the world. It is also illustrated with a wonderful selection of photographs.

This is a book that I would recommend to any visitor to Switzerland who is interested in the complex world of its wines, but does not seek to descend into that of technicalities and statistics. It certainly achieves the objectives its author lays out, and fills a



niche. It is sad that Swiss wines are not more widely available; then we might have a more detailed and authoritative work.