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through parts of the town to the "Alter Tonhalleplatz", near the Bellevue, where a huge effigy – called "Bogg" – of a snowman is ceremoniously burnt to the ground. But this year, in spite of gallons of paraffin, the bogey-man took a long long time to catch fire, because, ironically, it

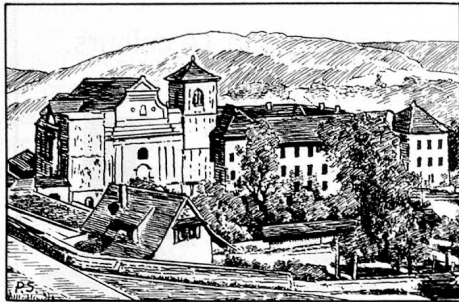
was poring with rain, into which snow flakes mingled freely. And as I type this report, everything is covered in white again, including all the poor spring flowers which have, it seems, started blooming too early . . .

Gottfried Keller

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# Swiss Abbeys



## ABBEY OF BELLELAY

In 1126, at Lake Joux near the village of Le Pont (Vaud), was founded the Ste-Madeleine Abbey. The years that followed experienced a great prosperity. The abbeys of Humilimont (1136), of Bellelay (1140), and of Fontaine-Andre (1143), all three situated in Switzerland, owe their origin to Ste-Madeleine Abbey of which there is nothing left today, excepting part of the ancient tower of the actual church of L'Abbaye village.

The squires of Grandson were the principal bestowers of the abbey of Lake Joux, mother abbey of Bellelay (Bernese Jura), founded between the years 1140 and 1142, and today a centre of science and clarity, and lately endowed with a renowned psychiatric clinic.

In 1192, the church was dedicated to the Holy Virgin of Bellelay. The new convent was at first peopled with friars of the order of Prémontrés from the Lake Joux abbey, who searched for wild and marshy land to be transformed into fertile country.

Three times, action of faith, devotion and courage, the convent was

rebuilt, embellished and enlarged. Its last reconstruction, dating 1714, harmonized the landscape, compelling the traveller to admire this imposing setting.

The abbatial church of Bellelay, in fact holds second rank of the churches of the Canton Berne. The southern tower of the actual edifice dates from the 14th century. The pillars and pilasters, surmounted with elegant cornices, support the vaulted ceiling. The whole, covered over with richly ornamented stuccos, is of a spotless whiteness. The interior of the church is of a rare loftiness.

In 1948, this church was registered as a Protected Historical Monument.

It is said that the Fathers of Bellelay have given the recipe for the fabrication of the delicious Bellelay cheese popularly called "Tête de Moine" (Monk's head).

The abbey of Bellelay has played a part of great consequence by its unlimited benevolence. Strangers of any confession, as well as neighbours have always received the warmest welcome.

*Pierre Savoie*



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PERMANENCE: chaque jeudi de 15h00 à dimanche du mois, matin et soir.

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