

LAVANT NEAR ALTON.

By H. BURY, M.A., F.G.S.

A little to the south of Alton is a Bourne or Lavant, which is marked on the six-inch Ordnance map as the "Leaven Stream," though I do not find that that name is locally recognised. It is not mentioned at all in Mr. Whitaker's memoir on the "Water Supply of Hampshire" (Mem. : Geol. Surv. pp. 24-37), and that it is not of very frequent occurrence, at any rate on any important scale, is testified by the fact that until recently it was allowed to cross the road from Alton to Selborne (Maiden's Lane), and even use it as a watercourse for 300 yards ; yet the road was usually in good repair and showed no signs of rough treatment. According to local belief it used to break out once in seven years, but this mystic number has lately lost its value, and for the last three or four winters the lavant has appeared annually.¹ In 1914 it assumed such dimensions that steps were at last taken to mitigate the inconvenience caused by it. The metal was removed from one side of the road and heaped on to the other, so that a ditch was formed for the water on the north side, and a dry space left for traffic on the south ; and where it crossed the lane a foot-bridge was erected.

On the Ordnance Survey map the stream is represented as rising three-quarters of a mile south of Chawton Church, but this year it extended far beyond that, and since it is said to have surpassed all records my own experience with it may be worth noting in detail. On Feb. 20th, 1915, coming down the valley from the south, after very heavy rain, I found water just across the road at Faringdon, and again in two or three places

¹ In Jan., 1916, the bourne had broken out again, making the third year in succession.

opposite Chawton Park, but nowhere for more than a few yards. I did not visit Maiden's Lane. On my return on Feb. 25th, after a few days of fairly dry weather, the road was nearly dry at Chawton, but at Faringdon, just north of the railway bridge, it was covered with water several inches deep for quite 50 yards. On March 15th, I again approached from the south, and as the weather had been very fine for a week or more I expected to find the road dry again, but to my astonishment it was much worse than before, and I had to drive through 150 to 200 yards of water, with a depth of 8 to 9 inches. At Chawton the conditions were very much the same as on Feb. 25th. On March 20th, after a fortnight of dry weather, I again visited the valley, and found the road at Faringdon dry again, but gravel pits in the village and at Hill Farm were still full of water. I could not find any one point from which it issued, though there may have been springs hidden in the gravel pit. I think I am justified in saying that at no period did the water extend quite as far south as the railway arch, though it was very near it on March 15th. From Faringdon to Chawton a broad but for the most part sluggish stream still ran through the meadows beside the road, forming pools here and there on the road itself, but nowhere quite crossing it. As the average gradient of the valley here is about 2 ft. per mile, I expected to find a stronger current, but no doubt the lateral expansion possible in the flat meadows checked this.

In Maiden's Lane the water was running merrily, some of it in the field, but most of it in the road. There was everywhere a dry path for pedestrians, but I gathered that even this had been absent during the worst of the flood, and vehicles still had to drive for some distance with one wheel in the water. Curiously enough the main Caker stream, which is crossed by the road about half-a-mile further on, and runs for some distance at the junction of the chalk and upper green sand, showed no signs of flood, although it is regarded by the local authorities as so much more important than the "Leaven Stream" that it is provided with a duly-constructed culvert under the road.

Plan of the Church of S. John the Evangelist

Boldre Harz's:

