bishop Manners-Sutton died, he had, at the instance of the Society, raised the mitred front of the Church in India. Thomas Fanshawe Middleton was consecrated first Bishop of Calcutta on Sunday, May 8, 1814, along with Murray, afterwards the good Bishop of Rochester. W. BENHAM.

(*To be continued.*)

ART. VIII.—THE HOUSES OF LAYMEN AND LAY REPRESENTATION: A NOTE.

THE proposal to create Statutory Houses of Laymen to help in administering the affairs of an autonomous Church requires more thought than it thus far seems likely to receive. At present there is some danger of large plans being made before a majority of intelligent Church-people are at all aware of what is being done in their name and in their assumed interests. It is proposed to give new and very serious powers to Convocation and the Houses of Laymen, but at present how many people know anything accurately about either? I fear that many Church reformers fail to understand the ignorance which prevails; but in order to test that ignorance I have made an experiment which may not be without interest and value.

I addressed the following questions to some Church laymen of my acquaintance:

1. What is the House of Laymen?
2. What are its powers?
3. How is it elected?
4. Does it represent the laity?
5. Ought it to have more power?

I chose my men carefully, with the view of getting the opinion of those who are not merely Church-goers, but men deeply interested in the welfare of the Church. I give the substance of the replies from four of them, which may, I believe, be regarded as typical of a much larger number.

The first reply is from a member of a Diocesan Conference. He did his best to conceal his ignorance on the subjects submitted to him, but finally hazarded the opinion that the House of Laymen is a sort of glorified Diocesan Conference which is elected by the Diocesan Conferences of the country; and if it did not represent the laity, well, it was the fault of the laity themselves for not taking more interest in Church questions. He was quite unable to define the powers of the House of Laymen, and therefore not in a position to say

whether it ought to have more power. This gentleman, I should add, is a diocesan official and a diocesan reader.

My second correspondent said he had heard of the House of Laymen through reading the reports of its proceedings in the *Standard*. But he "does not know" what the House is; he "does not know" what its powers are; he "does not know" how it is elected; and he "does not know" whether it ought to have further power. His answer to Question 4—"Does it represent the laity?"—is worth quoting in full, because it is so eminently typical of the position of the great bulk of Church-people on this question:

"I do not know. It does not represent me, because I have never voted for it. My age is fifty, and I have paid rates for twenty-three years. I have been a Church of England communicant for thirty-four years, a voluntary choirman and Sunday-school teacher for thirty-four years, yet I have never had this House brought to my notice before except in the newspapers."

My third correspondent replied to my questions with that brevity which may be the soul of wit, but does not help us much. He believes the House of Laymen to be "a purely imaginary spectre"; its powers are "nil"; its method of election is "unknown"; but he thinks it "certainly" ought to have more power.

My fourth correspondent said that he had certainty heard of the House of Laymen, but that of its powers and constitution he knows practically nothing. He imagines that it is "a sort of advisory Board to Convocation."

It will readily be admitted that when well-informed Churchmen are compelled thus to acknowledge their ignorance of the constitution and powers of the body which is supposed to represent them, that there is something wrong somewhere.

That there is room in the Church for a really representative House of Laymen there is no doubt, but that outside official circles there is any serious demand for it is by no means so clear. The fact is that the time is not yet ripe for the formation of such a House. Its establishment in the present uninformed state of Church opinion would be like unto putting the top stone upon a building before the foundations have been laid. At present there is nothing to build on, and Church reform, if it is to be real and thorough, must begin in the parish rather than the diocese. The laity are not indifferent to questions of this kind. They are only waiting for a lead; and any scheme that provides for their *direct* representation in the Councils of the Church will be received by them with enthusiasm. But to kindle their interest there must be put an end to, once for all, the present farcical methods

of election. There is no representation of the laity at present. What happens is this: The parish elects to the Ruri-decanal Conference, which in turn elects to the Diocesan Conference, which in turn, again, elects to the House of Laymen. For any future lay body the election must be from the parish, and the choice of the candidates must be free and unfettered. Any method of election less direct could result only in the formation of a body similar to that of the present House of Laymen, the members of which are often more clerical than the clergy themselves. H. C. HOGAN.

The Month.

AFTER all, the appointment to the See of London resulted in no surprise. The name of the new Bishop was one of those most persistently and confidently mentioned from the very first by newspaper paragraphists. There were so many reasons for hastening the appointment of a diocesan, that, when February passed into March and no news came, the quidnuncs devised an astonishing variety of reasons for the delay. The one most favoured assumed that the see had been offered to Dr. Welldon, of Calcutta. The rumour had no better foundation than the fact that Dr. Welldon was coming home for a little rest. But his plans had been made before Dr. Creighton died; and, even whilst the gossips were imagining a wrong motive for his return, he had put it off in consequence of the illness of the Bishop of Bombay. The Bishop of Winchester had, it was known, refused the see on the advice of his doctors. And so it came about that it was offered to the Bishop of Stepney, the youngest of the London Bishops, and the youngest of the Canons of St. Paul's, who will, as Bishop of London, be the youngest prelate on the Bench.

On the whole, the appointment was very well received. The Bishop of Stepney had made friends on all sides, and there was a general disposition to accept his advancement as an example of promotion by merit. Of course, it was an appointment made on very different lines from those on which the See of London has usually been filled. Intellectually, the new Bishop could hardly stand by the figures of Tait, Temple, and Creighton, and there are quarters in which this must tell. But it is rarely possible to get an absolutely ideal prelate, and Bishop Ingram's deep personal devotion and intimate acquaintance with the diocese count for much. His appointment may be taken finally to have settled all doubts as to the eligibility of suffragans for higher offices. The See of Wakefield is for the second time being held by an ex-suffragan; there is another ex-suffragan at Bristol; and now that an ex-suffragan goes to Fulham, the office must grow in dignity.