

“Another circumstance which partially explains the uncertainty as to titles may be noted. The Committee for Privileges, unlike other supreme tribunals—and such in substance, though not in form, it is—follows no fixed rules of decision. It claims great latitude, even to the extent of differing with itself. A solemn decision with regard to one claim may be disregarded on the very next occasion when the Committee for Privileges has to determine the same point. Peers sit in Parliament without question in virtue of a title similar in all essentials to that which the Committee has declared bad. It has repeatedly been declared that the decision of the Committee as to the advice which it will give Her Majesty upon a particular claim of peerage is mere information and advice, and is in no sense of the term a judgment. Its decision in the DEVON case—the opinion, it may be observed, of a particularly strong Committee—in regard to a fundamental point of peerage law, was overruled, perhaps without sufficient reason, by the Committee which subsequently investigated the WILTES case. The House of Lords itself reversed in 1782 the decision with respect to the BRANDON peerage which it had arrived at in 1711 and in 1719. No lawyer would be confident that were the point involved in the WENSLEYDALE peerage reinvestigated it would be determined in the same way as it was decided in 1856. Still less confidence would there be that the opinion of the Committee in regard to the WILTES case—an opinion unsupported by any lawyer of eminence and opposed to facts which have subsequently come to light—would be sustained if the matter were again argued. And this brings us in presence of another great source of uncertainty and instability as to the fate of peerage claims. The resolutions of the Committee for Privileges are not always the decisions of a very authoritative tribunal. Occasionally this has been conspicuously the case; and it is matter for surprise that the peers have not been more careful in regard to a point which so nearly touches their interests and dignity. Even when able lawyers sit upon the