

Part I.  
Committee  
on the Pe-  
tition.

ted the enquiry already made before the previous Committee, as to the general merits of the Bill, but with this difference, that before the Committee on the Petition the enquiry was *ex parte*, and before the Committee on the Bill parties were allowed to be heard against the Bill; and with respect to such applications as were not required to be referred to the Committee on the Petition, they enquired into the compliance with the Standing Orders. In addition to this, it was their duty to examine in detail the provisions of the Bill.

But by degrees, as the various Standing Orders were adopted, requiring Notices to be given and consents of interested parties to be obtained, before making the application to Parliament,—due examination into the observance whereof generally devolved upon the Committee on the Petition, as a preliminary enquiry—it came to be considered that the Standing Orders were their peculiar province, and that the enquiry into the preamble belonged to the Committee on the Bill. This enquiry, in so far as it had been conducted by the first Committee, had always been *ex parte*, and very imperfectly executed, so that but little reliance was placed upon it by the House.

Its present  
powers.

Accordingly, one of the first changes effected by the House, in the management of Private Business, was to deprive the Committee on the Petition of all authority to examine into the general merits of the application, and to confine their enquiry strictly to the question of fact, whether the Standing Orders, as to matters preliminary to the bringing in of the Bill, had or had not been complied with. That this alteration in the practice was a decided improvement will, it is submitted, be sufficiently apparent on view of the following considerations :—