

Here we strike the keynote of the life of the Burmans. Strangers call them lazy, but they are not idle except on principle. They can work splendidly when they choose, but they have long ago decided that to turn the world into a workshop, to toil incessantly for a mere subsistence or in order to gather up riches, is folly, as doing so destroys the pleasure of existence. As soon as a farmer has made a little money by selling his crop he gives a play, or pwee, to his town or village.—*Cornhill Magazine*.

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### PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF CHARTER.

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In New York the Grand High Priest decided that while the charter might not actually be in the hall, a High Priest could open a chapter and the business done was valid, but if the High Priest was absent, the King or the Scribe could not validly open a chapter, the charter being physically absent, its whereabouts being known. In the case decided, it was in a safe on the lower floor of the building where the chapter was meeting. In our opinion too much stress is generally laid on the presence of the paper called a charter. There may be a question, by the way, whether it is really a charter, or whether it be only an evidence of a charter. The so-called charter is frequently treated as though it were some magic talisman, and possessed within itself a force invigorating and energizing acts otherwise lifeless. Perhaps the situation would be better understood if the terminology was changed a little. What the Grand Chapter does for the companions to enable them to work validly is to give them "a warrant of constitution." The word charter is only the short of this. That warrant is a power, not something material. There is no innate life in matter, whether that matter be flesh or a piece of paper. The paper, or that parchment, if one pleases, is not that power, but the evidence of it. The Grand Chapter decrees the constitution of a new chapter, and under that

decree it is constituted and labors. Its right to continue to work depends upon the continuance of that warrant by the Grand Chapter. The so-called charter is simply the pledge, the material tangible evidence, the physical sign of the immaterial warrant and authority, the breath of the sovereign and validity conferring power, the Grand Chapter. If the Grand Chapter resolves to terminate the power granted the designated body of companions to work, the power ends then and there. It is not necessary to the stamping with invalidity any work done the physical recovery by the Grand Body of the material witness of its grant, the "charter." So while the warrant stands, the presence of the evidence of that warrant, while convenient, is not essential. Should a "charter" be burned, and remain unrevoked, there is no reason for the chapter suspending its labor for that reason. But if the warrant be cancelled, the presence of a thousand charters would not validate the work. We know of a lodge occupying ground previously held by another long defunct. The Master thought it his duty to be in physical possession of the charter and took it home. Then he forgot that he had done so. The charter of the defunct lodge was found "laying around in some cupboard," and was hung up without examination as the charter of that lodge. So it continued for years, no man knows how long, the charter of the lodge in the country, in a drawer of a Past Master, and the charter of a defunct lodge displayed in the hall. We may say, in passing, that it is probable that more than once this latter paper was shown a visitor on his demand to see the charter and proved eminently satisfactory and satisfying to him. Were the acts of the lodge invalid? If so, who will draw the line of demarcation in time between the valid and the invalid? If it is drawn too far back, what would be said of an attempt to validate acts already valid? As it was known in the case under review that the Grand Chapter authorized that King, in the absence of his High