CONTROLLER OF DEVILS

"Button Sahib."

CONTROLLER OF DEVILS

A LIFE OF JOHN PAUL WARBURTON, C.I.E., OF THE PUNJAB POLICE.

By G. D. Martineau.

OBTAINABLE FROM G.D. MARTINEAU, TEMPLE HOUSE,
BROAD STREET, LYME REGIS, DORSET,
FOR 10s. 6d., POST FREE.

Now, in the whole of Upper India, there is only one man who can pass for Hindu or Mahomedan, hide-dresser or priest, as he pleases. He is feared and respected by natives from Ghor Kathri to the Jamna Musjid; and he is supposed to have the gift of invisibility and executive control over many Devils.

RUDYARD KIPLING

ADDENDUM

Translation of a Marriage Deed between
WARBURTON SAHEB, and SHAH JAHAN BEGUM

I commence in the name of the Compassionate and most merciful God -

Thanks be to God the marriage is perfectly legal and binding in accordance with the Mahommudon laws - as laid down by our Prophet Mahommud - be peace and salutations upon him. -

On the 11th of Ramzan 1257 Heijera corresponding with the month of November 1840 A.D. I Abdool Raheem Khan, Son of Munsoor Khan Indarani, do make a solemn and legal Declaration, that I am the father of my virtuous and honourable Daughter Shah Jahan Begum. -

In the presence of the Mahommudon gentlemen, at my own free will and accord, I give away my daughter in the matrimonial alliance, which is allowable and legal according to the forms of Mahommudon religion to the gentleman of exalted dignity Warburton Saheb Bahadoor. -

For a Mahr (by marriage Contract) of six lakhs of Rupees the current coin of the present time, valuable jewelry, including household furniture. -

The above named gentleman in the presence of the honourable gentlemen Burnes Saheb, Stood Saheb, and Jenkins Saheb, has promised that if he ever were to deceive, ill treat my daughter in that case I will (he declares) commit the crime of falsehood to our prophet Jesus Christ be salutations on Him. - He further engages that he will render himself liable to a crime to his Government the East India Company by so doing. - These few words have been written in the way of Marriage Deed. -

Following are the signatures of witnesses. -
Meer Hadji
Abdoollah Khan Soobadar
Sirdar Khan.
The signature of the Mahommudon Law Giver
Kazee Futtehoollah. -

(The above copy has been supplied by Lieut-Colonel J. R. Birch, grandson of Sir Robert Warburton)

CONTROLLER OF DEVILS

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

The photograph of Sir Robert Warburton is reproduced from his Eighteen Years in the Khyber by the courtesy of John Murray, Ltd. The others belong to relatives, that of The Begum being kindly supplied by Mrs. Wassell, of Bradford, and the remainder by Mr. Desmond North of Sydenham from his album.

CONTROLLER OF DEVILS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Supposing a police officer of exceptional genius were to emerge in modern England; supposing he were to reorganize the Force, encouraging men of higher quality to enter it and to be trained under his disciplined direction; supposing he were to display such uncanny perception that he could pick out a criminal in a crowd, even though he had never seen the man before, have him searched and shown to be carrying burglarious equipment under his clothes; supposing that his personality were so powerful that he could disperse a riotous procession in two minutes by charging into it armed with a whip; supposing that, in the course of some thirty years' service, this officer were to turn our crime-dominated country into a safe, law-abiding community, freeing terrorized people from constant fear, tracking down leading criminals, bringing them to justice, or making the land so perilous a place for evil-doers that they were compelled to seek refuge abroad...

Imagine the reaction of the people of this country to a man who accomplished these things in the course of his service: would he not be regarded as a national hero, his name safe for posterity?

I have portrayed in a few lines so fabulous a character that it is difficult to believe that any such person can ever have existed.

Yet he did exist. He was decidedly flesh and blood. He did at least the equivalent of all that I have set down, and he did it in a land larger, more populous, even more criminal than modern England.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that, though most of his work was done in British territory, very few people in this country have ever heard of him, apart from the surviving members of his family.

Police work is notoriously trying to the patience, full of tedium and routine, long, apparently unprofitable hours of office drudgery, multifarious investigations that may lead to nothing, and the writing of reports which are often repetitive and dull to read. It must not be expected, therefore, that this biography, though it is that of perhaps the greatest detective who ever lived, will be free from these tedious elements.

In compiling it, however, I would like to stress the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, everything I have set down is true. Where anything arises which seems open to doubt, I have been at pains to say so. To obtain the necessary information, I have made extensive use of the semi-official Abstract of services, printed in Patiala at the Rajinder Press by Sayad Rajab Ali Shah, towards the end of 1902, and have sought to add more domestic detail and colour to this from notes made by the last surviving child of John Paul Warburton during the months of illness which preceded her death, fifty years later.

Naturally the latter are confused, chronologically uncertain, and set down without method or precision, just as they occurred to her; but I have taken trouble to check the facts, wherever they seemed open to question, or could be checked at all, so that here, too, the truth is told beyond reasonable doubt.

I have also referred at various points to the long obituary notice published in "THE TIMES" of December 29th, 1919, which was written by Edmund Candler.

One book of reference which I consulted, and which should be mentioned here, is THE DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY I studied it largely to see what light might be thrown on this biography by the recorded career of Sir Robert Warburton. What I found was indeed illuminating, even if in a decidedly negative way: in an account which extends beyond a double-columned page, Sir Robert is described as "the only son of Robert Warburton".

Of John Paul Warburton (who was at least a son of the same mother) there is no mention whatever. This fairly represents the knowledge of him among English people as a whole, but I hope that the pages which follow will do something to redress the balance.

Finally I owe my thanks to the President of the Kipling Society for correcting my assumption that Strickland (who took the man here described for his model) was an entirely fictitious character. He, too, was a real person.

ORTHOGRAPHICAL NOTE. Readers will find inconsistencies in spelling, particularly of Indian names. The exact spelling of the English version is so difficult to determine that I have made no attempt at conformity. In any case, the writers of different reports in the Victorian era evidently had their own individual ideas, like Sam Weller; and why not?

Chapter I

ROMANTIC ORIGINS

During the early morning, at some time in the year 1863, a young man was going for a run in that part of the Punjab which lies to the north of Lahore.

This vagueness about dates and places cannot be helped, especially in the early stages of the narrative. What is certain is that the young man's name(then) was John Paul Warburton, that in the following year he joined the Punjab Police, and that these early morning runs were part of a routine with which he strove to keep fit. He was of short, compact build, and knew that, as he grew older,he might be inclined to a fatal stoutness.

Though he bore an English name, he had never seen England, having been born in Afghanistan in 1840 and somehow smuggled out of that country by an ensign of Artillery named Robert Warburton. His mother, Shah Jahan Begum, a relative of Shah Shujah, King of Kabul, had been married to Sirdar Faiz Talab Khan, a high official in the service of the Amir, Dost Mohammed. How the abducted wife, with a baby, escaped both vigilance and vengeance must remain a mystery; but this was by no means all, for, on July 11th, 1842, she gave birth to a second son, named Robert after his father, in a Ghilzai Fort between Jagdullah and Gandamak, at a time when she was still fleeing from the troopers of Sardar Muhammad Akbar Khan. They pursued her for months after the massacre of the English at Kabul in November, 1841, and it seems that she was sheltered by relatives.

Her husband had given her up earlier and divorced her, whereupon she and Robert Warburton were married in the presence of Vincent Eyre and other officers of the British garrison at Kabul, who signed the marriage certificate.

Now, Eyre - afterwards Sir Vincent Eyre - had reached Kabul in April, 1840, and, being engaged in two actions afterwards, was wounded. He had his wife and child with him, and, in the subsequent negotiations with Akbar, the latter demanded that married officers and their wives and families should remain as hostages. Thus, the Eyres suffered nearly nine months' imprisonment. Was Akbar Khan hoping to find the royal runaway among them? She was not found, as we know, and, in about 1843, she escaped, disguised in the uniform of a British officer, and reached Peshawar. Again we are left to guess by what means the two children were smuggled through.

The elder boy, whose name was Jahan Dad Khan, had it changed to John Paul Warburton, and there remains some doubt as to whether he was wholly Afghan or partly British; for, though the former had been assumed originally, Robert Warburton is said to have detected, later on, some resemblance to himself, suggesting early marital relations between the eloping couple. This is unlikely but not impossible. The date of John Warburton's birth, August 28th, 1840, if correct, would mean that the love-affair must have begun towards the end of 1839. The British had entered Kabul in August of that year. On the other hand, the difference in Robert Warburton's treatment of his sons is so marked as to indicate that, certainly to begin with, he considered the elder as not being his; he called the second boy after him, and sent him to be educated, first at Mussoorie, but then to England, to Kensington Grammar School, whence he eventually passed into Woolwich, and obtained a commission in the Royal Artillery in 1861 - later to become the celebrated Sir Robert Warburton of the Khyber.

Meanwhile, John (ex-Jahan Dad Khan) had his schooling at a rather indifferent Roman Catholic establishment at Agra.

Let us return to him now, going for his run in the early morning, with perilous romance (which had surrounded both his birth and babyhood) awaiting him again just round the corner; for he came suddenly on a young woman in deadly danger and distress.

She was being attacked by a mad dog, and the young man rushed without hesitation to her rescue.

Again, the precise details are lacking, but he saved the girl, and, in the process, was bitten in the wrist. He immediately cauterized the bite. How? What means of branding the wound with a hot iron or other device were at hand in that early Indian day? Perhaps some habitation was at hand which possessed a charcoal-brazier or similar apparatus. It seems most improbable that he would be carrying anything of any use with him on a run. At all events, he survived the deadly threat of hydrophobia, and bore the mark on his wrist for the rest of his life.

The girl he had rescued proved to be as beautiful as any writer of romance could desire. She had a very white skin, hazel eyes, lovely arms and hands, and was only twenty-one.

Yet, she was already a widow, with three children, having

been married at fourteen to Ensign Meakins when he was stationed in Barrackpore. Her beauty as a precocious fourteen-year-old bride must have been even more striking. Everyone then called her "Sweet Mary Whayman". Her husband is thought to have died of cholera, and thereafter the family - Mr. and Mrs. Whayman, Mrs. Meakins, and the three children - travelled by bullock-cart to Amritsar. Other women in the Army were making the journey in the same way, and, in the course of it, one of them was delivered of a child - assisted by Mary Meakins, now a rough-and-ready but experienced obstetrician.

The romance of the rescue, the beauty of the young widow, and the circumstances of the family all pointed to a match.

The wooing was rapid, and the marriage took place at Ludhiana, some miles south-east of Amritsar, and just north of Patiala State.

A year later, the bridegroom became Assistant District Superintendent of Police at Gurgaon, being transferred almost immediately to Karnal. In the previous November, his father or (step-father), then a Lieutenant-Colonel, had died in Pesahwar.

Brought up in the country, the young police officer was fluent in the language, and had already some experience of critical situations. During the last years of his education at Agra, he was on his way home to Amritsar, where his father was then stationed, when he came upon a number of English people in flight from Delhi and the outbreak of the Mutiny. He crowded them into or outside the dak ghari, or closed carriage, in which he was travelling, and took them all to Amritsar.

That had only been seven years before he joined the police.

With a deep knowledge of the character of the people among whom he had lived since infancy, he was already on his way to becoming an astute detective when Captain Boddam, the District Superintendent, fell ill, and his duties were taken over efficiently by his Assistant, who showed not only tact and ability but an even temper and good manners.

He was always taking over something or somebody, as will be seen in the following chapter, but it was hard work for a twenty-four-year old police officer, after only one year's service, to have

sole charge of a whole district. Murder, dacoity, unnatural vice (this demanding investigation in the teeth of powerful opposition from influential quarters), and a variety of crimes occupied his attention, and resulted in convictions on an increasing scale even in those early days.

He had to deal with at least one case in which a Deputy Inspector had made a false report, adding to the intricacies of the work.

Fortunately his appetite for work was Gargantuan.

NOTE ON THE WARBURTONS. An Anglo-Irish family, coming originally from Cheshire, the Warburtons established themselves as Irish landlords in the 17th century, the family seat being at Garryhinch, in King's County. Robert, the 7th of nine sons of Richard Warburton, and his next brother, Arthur, were sent(after an unrestained childhood in Ireland) to the College of Angers in the south of France. Thence he obtained a nomination to Addiscombe, and was appointed to the Bengal Artillery in 1830. He was attached to the artillery of Shah Shujah's contingent for the campaign that began in Afghanistan in 1839.

Chapter II

THE HOUSEHOLD OF LUDHIANA

A man with such an appetite and aptitude for police work finds his services in demand in many directions. His official station from the end of June, 1864, till March, 1872, was mostly Karnal; but this period was interspersed with two brief spells of duty at Delhi and ten months at Muzaffagarh, where he became District Superintendent in name as well as in fact, and some special duty in Amballa, lasting little more than a fortnight.

Where, meanwhile, was his family making its home?

It seems that it had become established at Ludhiana, where, it will be remembered, he was married - a place destined to become associated as vividly as any with John Warburton's career as a detective.

What has been described as "a large and rambling house" provided a home not only for the young police officer and his wife but for many others; Mr. and Mrs. Whayman, who had their own quarters; the three children by Ensign Meakins; and also "Sweet Mary's" sister, married to a Mr. Wade, who disappeared, but she died on the birth of her second child - so two more children were also given a home with the others!

Last, but by no means least, there was the Afghan mother, sometimes referred to as "the Princess", but more usually as The Begum, which may mean anything from Queen to lady of high rank; and she, too, had her quarters and personal attendants, serving her with a devotion akin to slavery. It may be asked why Robert Warburton, recognized beyond all doubt as the son born in wedlock, did not contrive to do something towards making a home for his widowed mother. In 1866, however, the failure of the Agra and Masterman's Bank left him with nothing but his pay to support her, so that it was perhaps inevitable that he should entrust her to her other son. Meanwhile, to improve his prospects he exchanged into the 21st Punjabis, with whom in 1868 he set out for the Abyssinian campaign under Napier, whose commendations were to stand him in such good stead after he had been invalided home to England a year later.

We have glanced briefly at the community in the house at

Ludhiana before "Sweet Mary" began to bear children by her second husband. There were to be seven of these Warburtons altogether though one boy died of pneumonia at the age of two. The youngest Meakins child, Lizzie, also died, and her name was given to the second Warburton daughter, with the picturesque addition of Selina.

Servants were plentiful, and the house had a vast compound, on which four tennis courts were eventually laid out.

For water, there was a well, with the usual water-wheel, operated by bullocks and creaking away as the flowing buckets were drawn up.

It seems impossible that, even in those days, such a household can have been maintained solely on police pay. Colonel Warburton may have made some provision before his death, but probably Mr. Whayman contributed something. He was employed by the Public Works Department, and is supposed to have been responsible for the building of some of the houses in Amritsar Cantonments. As he was a conspicuously tall man, he was apt to fit them up in a style which was inconvenient to occupants less generously proportioned. When he had to go away for any reason, he would write letters to his wife ending "Yours faithfully to Death, John Whayman". There is no suggestion that this was humorously intended. Mrs. Whayman, who commanded such fidelity, was as diminutive as her husband was tall, and, as she always liked to wear black, she was not unlike a miniature Queen Victoria.

While her son-in-law was riding out and about on his ceaseless police work, she took a major share in helping her daughter to look after the children and to see that they had their meals properly, giving her a liberal education in the refinements of the table. She also saw to the poultry, sheep, and cows.

The Whaymans kept their own staff of servants, and it is impossible to compute the number of souls attached to that estate in one capacity or another. Servants in India had their own quarters, and the various habitations must have covered a considerable acreage.

In such a mingling of persons of all ages, relations of mixed blood and different origin, there were bound to be divergences of outlook, favouritisms, jealousies, and individual pride.

The Whaymans were as English as they could be, and racial feeling is as natural as any other prejudice that humans, animals, or birds are heir to. John Warburton, though he adopted English ways, dress and style more and more as he grew older, was unmistakably oriental in his early days, and as a boy had been wont at times to wear Indian dress - even as Kim did, for other purposes.

It was the eastern ingredient which gave him the initial advantage he enjoyed in his profession; he not only spoke the vernacular with native fluency - he could think like one of the people of the country, and it lent him an uncanny understanding of the men and women he had to deal with as a policeman.

It may seem extraordinary that Mrs. Whayman should have been inclined to look down on him because he was not English, especially as she owed him so much, besides the life of her daughter, but we must be content with the platitude that people cannot help the manner in which they are made. "Sweet Mary", for her part, remained devoted to him always, and put him first in every way, which perhaps did not help the English mother-in-law to modify her attitude; and, if Mrs. Whayman was disposed to put on English airs with her tolerant and perceptive son-in-law, this was nothing to the lofty manner in which the Begum treated her daughter-in-law. When the latter went to visit her in her quarters, she would be kept standing the whole time - because the Begum never forgot that she was of royal blood. She once unbent sufficiently to ask the younger woman to let her have some mulberries, of which she was particularly fond; and Mary Warburton, anxious to please, sent in a large bowl of them. They were promptly returned by one of the Afghan servants, with a message that, when she asked for fruit in Afghanistan, she expected baskets of it, so that all the servants and slaves could have a share. The Begum smoked a hookah, of which there is photographic evidence, and family tradition insists that her maid-in-waiting was liable to be branded with a hot iron for any serious shortcoming.

She in her turn was neglected by her second son, Robert, who, even when in command of the Fort at Amritsar, did not go to see his mother, though John Warburton urged him to do so, while the Begum, living proudly in purdah, would not show how deeply she was hurt.

THE BEGUM, WITH HER HOOKAH, AND SERVANTS.

In his Eighteen Years in the Khyber, Sir Robert Warburton had little to say about his mother, suppressing the fact she was a divorcée and giving neither her name nor the date of her death; nor did he mention the existence of her elder son, who had grown into as potent a force in his own field as he himself was on the frontier. Modern critics, in imperfect retrospect, would utter their favourite cry of "snob!", overlooking the fact that the writing of the book had been suggested by the Prince of Wales, to whom it was dedicated; and, whatever he might have thought of such matters, Queen Victoria was still on the throne. The author might have been less careful to preserve the proprieties of the age if he had known that he would be dead by the time the book was published.

In the vast and growing household of Ludhiana, there were personal preferences which were apt to cross the frontiers of blood especially where the children were concerned. Little Lizzie Warburton, born in 1873, learnt when she was barely three years old that old Grandfather Whayman had a soft spot in his heart for her, and she would creep along to his part of the house, sure of a gift of sweets, which he would pour into her extended apron. A

generous child, she would go back and share them with the other children. In her short sleeves, her arms would bear traces of the adhesive burden, and the tall, bearded Scottish doctor, who attended the family and prodded the infants with his umbrella, called her "Sticky" - a nickname which persisted for some time. On the other hand, Mrs. Whayman's favourite grandchild was the youngest Warburton girl, Muriel, who for her part was jealous of her pretty eldest sister, Durani (or "Dani"), and told her mother an outrageous tale that she drank eau de cologne to brighten her eyes and cheecks.

Little Mrs. Whayman was an extraordinary character, given alternately to comic and tragic moods. During the former, she would play "Bears" with her grandchildren, who turned the high Indian beds into miniature houses by putting blankets or curtains all round and retiring behind them, with their dolls for company, while "Grannie" prowled round, growling, to their mingled terror and delight. Anyone whose leg was seized would have to come out and be the bear, but the performance can hardly have carried the same conviction.

In tragic mood, she once decided that she was dying, and forced a death-bed promise out of two of the children. One was Silas, son of the late Ensign Meakins, and called after her own brother; the other was Zella, daughter of the absconding Mr. Wade. She called these two cousins to her bedside, joined their hands solemnly and ceremoniously, and made them promise to marry. Though she then recovered, and died some time later in Lahore, Silas and Zella treated the betrothal seriously, and eventually kept the promise.

Schooling was a problem. There seemed to be a suitable school in Agra, run by a red-haired headmistress, who had a gift for instilling a passion for the works of Dickens; but it suddenly transpired that she had a past, which, moreover, was still present in the form of an illegitimate daughter by a General she had lived with in Africa.

There was then a period with a governess at home, but the governess's brother was charged with murdering a railway passenger, he being the guard on the train. That was bringing crime too close to the home of a police officer. Thereafter, the girls were sent to Woodstock, a school in Landour, run by Americans,

largely for missionaries' daughters, but also including some whose fathers were Calcutta merchants. Mrs. Scott, the principal, was a great believer in worship, and services were frequent. Once, on discovering that some of her pupils had indulged in a mild form of "make-up", she summoned the whole school to hear the story of Jezebel. She held up the Warburton girls as "the most sensibly dressed". They were not indeed in a position to attire themselves other than in the simplest fashion.

Only one of the family seems to have been sent to study for a profession in Britain - John Warburton's eldest son, Bob - and this was not a success. He went to Edinburgh, where as a medical student, he "got into a wild set", gave rein to the dissolute side of his nature, and was recalled peremptorily to India. This was shortly before his mother died, in 1889. She is said to have had a premonition of impending death, which, unlike that of her mother, Mrs. Whayman, proved to be well-founded, for, when she saw her daughters off to school for the long March-November term, she said that she would never see them again.

Though no needlewoman, in fact so averse to sewing that, as a child, she would give her lunch to any girl who would do it for her, she had a genius, no doubt acquired from her mother, for keeping a good table, revelled in recipes, and produced such Christmas cakes and puddings as her husband said that he had never known. This, of course, was all done by supervision, since servants were never lacking, but it was a matter of general knowledge that young Mrs. Warburton's table was always groaning with good food. She used to drive out in a low basket-carriage, drawn by a fat white pony called Dumpy. In an India where fashions changed slowly, she was remembered for always wearing wallflowers on her bonnet.

She seems to have delegated various duties usually performed by the mother in person. For instance, she would depute the Head Bearer, an old Hindu named Gulzar, to dose the children with castor-oil, which he administered laced with peppermint and brandy, following it up with sweets. Most of the servants were Kashmiri Mohammedans, among whom were two ayahs, but they were not trusted with this delicate task. One of them saved Lizzie Selina's life when she was overcome with the fumes of charcoal used to boil the bath-water.

Mary Warburton was kind to her servants, but some of

them probably did not look forward to Sunday, when she used to encourage beggars to come and line up for a meal. She would then go round with her servants and have baskets of lentils and rice doled out to each of them in mugs.

When she died, her funeral-procession is said to have been a mile long, swelled by the multitude of beggars she had fed on Sundays.

This belongs to the Amritsar period, and so we have left Ludhiana in the last two or three pages of this chapter, but it seemed best to keep the domestic picture unbroken. It lies behind the scenes of purely police activities, which we must now retrace our steps to follow, as they were to build up an astonishing and dramatic reputation.