CHAPTER I
1844 1867

John Edwin Sandys was born on May 19, 1844, at Leicester, to the Rev. Timothy Sandys and his wife Rebecca: the early years of his life, from the ages of one and a half to eleven, were spent at Calcutta. Apart from the fact that the grandfather of Timothy Sandys was Isaac Sandys, of Prescot, Lancashire, a member of the Society of Friends, who was born about 1720, little is known of the immediate ancestry of the Sandys family; this is probably in part due to the father of Timothy Sandys being renounced by his family for attending a race-meeting at Doncaster, and later refusing to introduce his family to his relatives. It is, however, possible that Isaac Sandys was a member of the principal Sandys family, which was for many generations resident in Lancashire and traced its descent from the twelfth century; an interesting family epitaph may be seen in Hawkshead church, Lancashire, dedicated in memory of William and Margaret Sandys, the parents of Edwin Sandys, of St John’s College, Cambridge (1519–88), Master of Catharine Hall, Bishop of Worcester and London, and Archbishop of York. This epitaph was translated in 1894 by John Edwin Sandys, whose own career was not unlike that of his namesake:

Great were the pledges of favour divine they received in abundance;

Greatest of all was the fame won them by Edwin their son. Doctor was he, and Proctor, and Head of a College at Cambridge:

Thrice as a Bishop enthroned, thrice was he head of a See.
The property of the principal Sandys family was Graythwaite Hall, situated on the shores of Lake Windermere.

Timothy Sandys, the father of John Edwin, devoted his life from the age of twenty-six to missionary work in India; he was an impetuous and untiring worker in all departments of the missionary field, of whom it was written after his death: “He preached in the bazaars and taught in the schools; itinerated in villages and visited the upper classes at their homes; catechised inquirers and taught his teachers; and the result was that scarcely any man in the capital of India could thank God for so large a number of spiritual children”. Doubtless the industry and the ungrudging devotion to duty of John Edwin in his later career was partly inspired by the early associations of his family life: he too was of a deeply religious nature, as is shown by his early ambition to be a missionary and by the regularity of his religious observance throughout his life. The influence of their father’s example is also seen in the lives of the three elder brothers of John Edwin: the eldest as a Government clerk died of fever in Calcutta, the second as a missionary student was killed on the first day of the Indian Mutiny, the third took Holy Orders and spent many years of service in India. The closest of the family in age, as in affection, to John Edwin was his sister Priscilla, two years his senior, who married the Rev. R. R. Winter, of the Delhi Mission; but, owing to the conditions of Indian life, his boyhood was lonely, for while he was in India the older children were being educated in England. In 1853, when John Edwin was nine, his mother died of cholera, and in the following year his
father married his second wife, Emily Guthrie Stuart, by whom he had two sons and two daughters: of these two subsequently undertook missionary work.

The first school attended by John Edwin was a day-school in Calcutta; while journeying to this school in a dogcart an accident befell him, which affected his health for life and prevented him from taking strenuous exercise. During his childhood he also learnt to speak both Hindustani and Bengali, and knew several Oriental alphabets. In later life he retained his interest in India, following and supporting the activities of the Delhi Mission, and preserving a little of his knowledge of Oriental languages: this interest is recorded by J. S. Reid in a short obituary notice published in the Proceedings of the British Academy:

When a Professorship of Sanskrit was established and the late Professor Cowell ("sanctum et venerabile nomen") was appointed to be the first holder, his earliest course of lectures was given on Comparative Philology to four listeners, of whom Mrs Cowell was one, while the other three were Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir John Sandys and myself.... A little later, Professor Cowell (whose enthusiasm for teaching was remarkable) read Sanskrit with a small class, consisting of Sandys, the late Professor Skeat, the late Charles Walter Moule, and myself.

In 1855, at the age of eleven, he was sent home to England, sailing round the Cape of Good Hope under the careful escort of two German missionaries, who taught him to play chess. In England he resided at the Church Missionary Children’s Home, Islington, London, where he was educated for the following four years. Soon after his arrival in England he received the following letter from his father:
May 16 1856. Calcutta.

My dear John Edwin,

Your journal reached us last evening from which we were happy to learn that you had had a pleasant voyage, and had reached London in health and safety. The Anorgies appear to have done all for you that we could desire and your fellow passengers and the Captain appear to have been kind and agreeable people. I suppose by this time you have got settled in the C.M. Children’s Home… I desire to bless and praise our Heavenly Father for his goodness in having preserved you during the voyage and permitted you to reach England in good health, and I hope and trust that the divine blessing may rest upon you in all your future course, that you may be a pious, diligent and attentive pupil and make such advancement in Scriptural and Scientific and useful knowledge as may with God’s blessing qualify you to become a useful man when you shall have grown up. You have hitherto taken pleasure in your studies, and this I trust will continue to be the case, for such students as delight in their studies advance with much greater ease, and make much more efficient advancement than such as take no delight or feel no pleasure in their duties. You can let us know what studies you have been set to, and what you think of the advantages of education in England over those you have enjoyed in Calcutta. You will find it of advantage to take suitable and sufficient bodily exercise which will tend to giving you a strong and healthy constitution….

With our best love I remain, my dear John Edwin, your very affectionate father

T. Sandys.

He was still at the Church Missionary Children’s Home when the Indian Mutiny broke out; the first victim of the rising at Delhi on May 11, 1857 was his elder brother Daniel Corrie Sandys, then a missionary student of twenty-two years of age. A letter to John
Edwin from his sister Priscilla describes the circumstances of his death:

We are now quite settled at Delhi, a place full of memories of dear Daniel. The natives here confirm the report that as soon as he heard the Mutiny had taken place he said to his Moonshi, who was at his house at the time: “I will just go and take this boy (the brother of his fiancée) to his parents and return quickly”. But he never came back as a party of Sepoys met him on his way home and shot him in his buggy.

The courageous and untimely end of his elder brother always remained a vivid memory and a shining example to John Edwin, and it probably strengthened his inclination to devote his life also to the missionary field. His remaining years at the Missionary Home were overshadowed by the dangerous circumstances in which his family was placed by the Indian Mutiny.

In 1859, as he had rapidly outgrown the teaching of the Missionary Home, he was sent to Repton School, an old foundation which, after a period of decline, had begun to revive under the able headmastership of the Rev. S. A. Pears, D.D., sometime Fellow of Corpus, Oxford. He entered the house of the Rev. Edward Latham, whose father had preceded Mr Sandys at the Calcutta Mission and was a friend of the Sandys family. In later years Sandys often remembered with gratitude and affection the assistance afforded to him in the early period of his school career by his headmaster and his housemaster. On attending the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Repton, Dr Sandys recalled the memories of his early life at school, describing himself as “a studious boy” and “a boy
given to books”: but if books claimed much of his attention, he was even at an early age keenly interested in most things which came within the orbit of his experience. When he was told that he would go to Repton, he did not even know where it was, “but”, he says, “I seized the largest gazetteer that I could find, and had soon mastered all the antiquarian details as to the ancient seat and burial place of the bygone Mercian Kings”. While he was at Repton, his health was not robust, but, despite the effects of his accident in Calcutta, he participated in the school routine of games; later he looked back with gratitude to the compulsory football which had developed his strength. After leaving Repton for the freer air of Cambridge, he had little time for games; he appears, however, in a Cambridge letter to The Rep-tonian as coxing the winning O.R. four in a race, where coxing was evidently important.

The only event in the aquatic line which will prove of any interest to Reptonians, as such, is the Repton “Scratch Fours”. These races came off on December 2nd, 1865. The boats that entered were five in number, implying the existence of at least twenty-five Reptonians at Cambridge. The upsetting of one of the boats behind that which was eventually victorious, gave additional liveliness to the scene from the banks.

At Repton his ability as a scholar and the soundness of his character were early recognised: the first report sent to his father was highly laudatory, to judge from his father’s letter to John Edwin:

My dear John Edwin,

8th August 1859. Calcutta.

I am happy to learn that you are now settled at Repton…. I was glad to read the report Mr Latham had sent to Mr Stuart
concerning you, and I sincerely hope that you have continued to justify the good opinion he then had of you. It is our sincere hope that with God's blessing upon the instruction which you now receive you may become qualified for usefulness when you shall have grown up, if it should please God to spare you until you shall have done so.

With our united love

I remain

Your very affectionate father

T. SANDYS.

In 1861 he reached the Sixth Form and gained three prizes; he also began to develop in character, a fact noticed by his housemaster, who hoped that Sandys was destined for work in the missionary field.

My dear Mr Sandys,

October 18, 1862. Repton

Your son is doing very well here, and I trust that the grace of God is indeed working in his heart. His conduct and diligence are exemplary, and he seems possessed of abilities which will at this rate secure him a somewhat distinguished career at Cambridge, and what is far more, will fit him to aid the promotion of Christ's kingdom (humanly speaking) largely. It is a great pleasure to see such boys as he and Thomas and Frost are turning out—proofs that those who for the kingdom of God's sake have withdrawn from their sons some of the ordinary benefits of a home and paternal education, do not really cause their sons loss, for God becomes more than ever their Father.

Edwin does not at present seem inclined to foreign work I think; he rather looks forward to going through the University and taking orders in England. This is the best training for a missionary I fancy: which I cannot help in my heart of hearts hoping that he will ultimately become. For the claims are so great and the work so noble and the men so obviously blest of God, that it is the best I could wish for my dearest friends. Still that it should be spontaneous is the first requirement. And such
a clergyman as Edwin promises to make, if God’s blessing follows him in the same course as hitherto, is beyond price in old England.

He is thin, but strong and apparently quite healthy, a different person altogether from what he was when first he came here. And there is a freshness and sincerity of mind and manner, with a quiet manly reserve and modesty, which is very pleasing. He is rather deficient in general interests and still almost too quiet, but it is a fault on the right side, and he has much opened out since he became Sixth form. You see I write freely to a father who has not seen his boy for many years, what I think will interest him...

Sincerely wishing you a continual blessing in your labours and in your family—in Edwin not least I am sure—I beg to remain,

My dear Sir,
yours very faithfully,
E. LATHAM.

At this time, when his intellect and interests were expanding, he formed many close and lasting friendships, born during the country walks which he took on Sundays with chosen companions. Two of these friends he retained throughout his life, Will Bagshawe, later headmaster of the lower school at Uppingham (at whose home in Derbyshire Sandys spent many of his school holidays), and W. F. A. Archibald, later Master of the Supreme Court of Judicature; in his choice of friends is reflected his own character, for the former of these two writes in the term after Sandys left Repton: “I will say that I hate the rifle corps fearfully, only as the Doctor wishes it I think we ought not to care for a little trouble, but try and keep it up well for the credit of the school”. During his last year at Repton Sandys was head-boy of Latham’s house, and was succeeded in that
position by Will Bagshawe in 1863–4. Of his other contemporaries at Repton we may mention two. One was his “almost namesake”, that distinguished scholar, Professor Sanday, in whose school study Sandys used to read portions of the classical authors. More than forty years after the school association of the two had ceased, Sandys, as Public Orator, in presenting Sanday for an Honorary Degree spoke of him as “condiscipulus”, and said that he himself was “non immemor actae non alio rege puertiae”. Another contemporary was H. E. Fanshawe, subsequently Fellow Classical Lecturer and Tutor of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

It had been decided that Sandys should go to Cambridge, and Dr Pears in a letter to Mr Sandys warmly recommended St John’s College, and expressed the high hopes he entertained for John Edwin in a University career. He writes in 1862:

Your son continues to be a most satisfactory pupil, very attentive and gradually unfolding considerable mental power. There is every prospect, if his life and health last, of his gaining high distinction at the University; and at St John’s College, I have little doubt, he will receive substantial encouragement —I have known young men of like character receive so much assistance in that College, as to pay their own way through College life from first to last.

Of his personal character Mr Latham knows more than I. I have a strong impression that he is a boy of sound and deeply seated religious conviction and feeling. I believe he leaves the question of future employment still open, in which I think him right, with a strong leaning to the ministry, either at home or abroad. . . . Let me add that it will give my wife and me a sincere pleasure to receive Mrs Sandys, whenever she is disposed to come to Repton.
In the spring of 1863 he gained a minor scholarship at St John’s College, Cambridge, and he went into residence in the following October. He ended his career at Repton in a blaze of glory by winning six school prizes, four for Classical Composition and two for English Essay and English Verse. As his father was a man of limited means, Sandys lived almost entirely on his scholarships during his residence in Cambridge, but thanks to the generosity of St John’s College and Repton School he appears to have suffered no severe financial disabilities. At St John’s College he was greatly helped by the Tutor, Mr Hadley, a man in whom Dr Pears placed the highest confidence. The Master of St John’s College at this time was Dr Bateson, a man of wide interests and a leading figure in University politics; he was largely responsible for the new Statutes of 1860, which replaced those dating from the reign of Henry VIII. Nor was he solely an able administrator; during the years of his mastership (1857-81) St John’s College enjoyed a period of great prosperity: in his time the new College chapel first proposed in 1687 was built, and the College library was extended. We read of him in the College History: "‘As Master of the college’, said one who was intimately acquainted with him, ‘Dr Bateson was ever ready to take the lead in widening and increasing the teaching powers of the college, and in rewarding intellectual distinction of every kind’”. Under such a Master Sandys passed his undergraduate days, was elected Fellow of St John’s College and held the office of College Tutor.

Apart from his academic successes there is little to