**PHILIPPA FAWCETT 1868-1948**

In 1890, Philippa Garrett Fawcett was placed 'above the Senior Wrangler' in the examinations for the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge. The name 'Wrangler' was then given to men who gained what we now call first class honours, the Tripos being the final degree examinations. Women were not eligible to take Cambridge degrees and so could not be listed among the Wranglers.

Philippa was unusually fortunate in her parents. Her father, Henry Fawcett (1833-1884) was a seventh Wrangler, though immediately afterwards he switched to politics and economics, and was appointed to the Cambridge Chair of Political Economy in 1863. A few years before, he was blinded in a domestic shooting accident, but he did not allow this to affect his life, and in 1865 was elected Member of Parliament (initially for Brighton, then for Hackney); he combined both careers until his death.

Philippa's mother, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929) was the eighth child of a remarkable family. Her sister, later Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, became distinguished in the field of medicine. Millicent met Henry through a mutual interest in progressive politics and they married in 1867. Philippa was their only child. After Henry's comparatively early death (probably the long-term effect of a fever), Millicent pursued her particular interest in Women's Suffrage, being elected President of the National Union of Suffragist Societies in 1897. Partial voting success was achieved in 1918, and Millicent was in the Gallery of the House of Commons when full voting rights for women were granted in 1928 (she had been made a Dame in 1925).

With such a background, Fawcett probably had at least as much opportunity, and more encouragement, to succeed than any woman of her generation. But of course the playing-field was not yet level. Though Fawcett was educated at Clapham High School, run by the Girls' Public Day School Trust, there were not enough qualified female mathematics teachers, so young women had to go to the trouble of attending a preliminary university course in order to reach the standard required to benefit from Cambridge (as did some young men). This is what Fawcett chose to do, taking courses over two years at London University, and in 1887 was awarded a scholarship to Newnham College, Cambridge – the college her parents had helped to found. After three years she came 'top' in the competitive Part I of the Tripos examinations, and went on in 1891 to be placed alone with the official Senior Wrangler in the top division of the first class in the optional Part II. Then, with another scholarship, she spent a year on research, producing a paper on a topic in 'applied' mathematics. However her talents were not seized on – and rewarded – as they invariably were in the case of any male Wrangler in the top echelon.

Fawcett was elected a Fellow of Newnham (and also a Fellow of University College, London). She remained at Newnham as a College Lecturer (women were not permitted to work as University Lecturers) from 1892 until she resigned in 1902, when she was appointed as a lecturer, to train mathematics teachers, at the Normal School, Johannesburg, South Africa. Her interest in the country had been fired when she had earlier paid an extended visit with her mother, and she managed to foster good relations with the Boer population despite a difficult political situation. Her mother, rather naturally, had ambitions for her career, but these could not be fully realized because of Fawcett's retiring disposition – she did not have the type of personality that could fight to throw open a new profession to women. So when she left South Africa in 1905, it was to take up a post as principal assistant to the Director of Education of the newly-formed London County Council – surprisingly, at the same salary as a man would have received. She developed the teacher training colleges, Furzedown and Avery Hill in particular, and achieved some moderate successes, fighting for equal pay for LCC staff. She also oversaw the transfer of the London Day Training College to the University of London as the Institute of Education. She retired in 1934 but continued her support, financial as well as practical, for her favourite causes, notably the London and National Society for Women's Service (renamed the Fawcett Society in 1953, in honour of Dame Millicent); she served on the executive committee and in 1945-46 as its President. Fawcett died in 1948, a month after the decree that allowed women to be awarded the B.A. degree at Cambridge had received Royal Assent.

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