

Commons inadequately prepared because I gave up to the acquisition of wealth the time which I ought to have spent in the acquisition of political knowledge."

There was now a vacancy in the representation of Cambridge. Fawcett became a candidate. The Conservatives opposed him as a Radical, and they were shocked that he was willing to admit Dissenters to fellowship! The contest cost six hundred pounds, and Fawcett was defeated.

A vacancy occurred soon after at Brighton. Again, Fawcett became a candidate. The contest, "in which rotten eggs and Brighton pebbles played their part, was bitter in the extreme. Fawcett was opposed because he was poor, and would not, as well as could not, spend money on the election; he had favoured co-operation, and was therefore said to be "plotting the ruin of the tradesman," and worst of all, and above all other objections, he was blind. For the third time he was defeated.

To any other man but Henry Fawcett, the case must have seemed utterly hopeless. Not so to him, who had made up his mind when a boy that he would some time enter the House of Commons. He tried a fourth time for Brighton, and was elected. At thirty-two Fawcett had become a member of Parliament.

What must have been his feelings as he sat in his seat for the first time! He thus writes to his father:

"I have just returned from my first experience of the House of Commons. I went there early in the morning, and soon found that I should have no difficulty in finding my way about. I walked in with Tom Hughes, about four minutes to two, and a most convenient seat, close to the door, was at once, as it were, conceded to me; and I have no doubt that it will always be considered my seat. Every one was most kind, and I was quite overwhelmed with congratulations."

Fawcett showed his good sense by remaining comparatively quiet

in the House of Commons for some months. His first set speech was on March 13, 1866, on the Reform Bill for the extension of the franchise.

The Conservatives contended that the common people did not desire the right to vote. Fawcett spoke earnestly on behalf of the working classes. He urged that the great questions of the future were those affecting labour and capital, and those most deeply concerned had a right to help make the laws.

Fawcett's second speech, made the following month, was upon the opening of fellowships to Dissenters. At Oxford University, strange as it may seem in this nineteenth century of freedom of speech and belief, a Dissenter could not take a degree. At Cambridge a Dissenter could hold a scholarship, but not the higher reward of a fellowship. Many fellowships in both universities could be held only on condition of taking orders in the Church of England.

Fawcett argued that every religious test which excluded any sect from the universities should be abolished. He felt that the fellowships should be given to the most distinguished men. Fawcett laboured in support of the University Tests Abolition Bill, till, after being twice rejected by the House of Lords, in 1869 and 1870, it was passed in 1871 by both Commons and Lords. Clerical fellowships were abolished in 1877.

Fawcett desired especially to see the children of agricultural labourers as well provided for intellectually as those in manufacturing districts. Both in Parliament and in the press he was constantly asking for better education, more comfortable homes, higher wages, and happier lives for the labourers.

"Many years of my life," he said, "were passed on a large farm. It is a fact that the vast majority of agricultural