GREAT STAUGHTON AND ITS PEOPLE

HOW A HUNTINGDONSHIRE VILLAGE MADE ITS MARK ON ENGLAND'S HISTORY

by

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Fanny Duberly: forgotten heroine of the Crimea

The predominant image evoked by the Crimean War can be summarised in just five words: *Charge of the Light Brigade*, coupled with some half-forgotten lines of Tennyson. A moment's further reflection will almost certainly bring to mind the legendary exploits of the 'heroines of the Crimea', Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, whose popularity and renown continue to capture the public imagination to this day.

For more than a century and a half, these two formidable ladies have occupied a Pantheon all of their own but perhaps the time has now come for them to admit the third heroine of the Crimea, less well-known than the lady with a lamp or the proprietor of the British Hotel but who lived through and reported on the entire campaign. She was Frances Isabella Duberly and in her *Journal kept during the Russian War*, she gives a vivid account of the bloody battles at the Alma, Inkerman and Sebastopol and arguably did as much as William Howard Russell of *The Times* and the photographer Roger Fenton to bring the horrors and miseries of the war to the British breakfast table. Unlike her two more celebrated contemporaries (and the poet Tennyson), she was actually present as the Light Brigade thundered into the Valley of Death.

So, who was Frances Isabella Duberly and how did she manage to inveigle herself into the man's world of 'soldiering and death?' Frances Isabella Locke was born on 27 September 1829 to Wadham Locke and his wife Anna Maria Selina, née Powell, of Rowdeford House, Devizes, in Wiltshire. Wadham Locke was a banker and financial adviser to numerous local magnates and Frances Isabella enjoyed a privileged childhood, attended by servants and surrounded by horses and ponies. Dispensing swiftly with her multisyllabic forenames, Miss Locke was soon transformed into Fanny Locke, expert horsewoman, gifted pianist, fluent in French and endowed with all the accomplishments of a young lady of her class. She was confident, spirited, self-assured and independent of mind. What could have induced this intelligent daughter of a wealthy, well-connected banker to swap Victorian domesticity for a life on the killing fields of the Crimea and India?

In 1850, at the age of 21, Fanny married Henry Duberly, the 28-year-old second son of Sir James Duberly of Gaynes Hall, Great Staughton. In 1847, Henry had been appointed paymaster to the 8th Royal Irish Hussars, a position that seemed to have suited his quiet, unambitious temperament. As paymaster, he occupied an influential seat in the army hierarchy (he was the money man), but he would not be required to exercise his not inconsiderable shooting prowess on the battlefield.

On the title page of her *Journal kept during the Russian War: from the departure of the army from England in April 1854, to the fall of Sebastopol*, the author signs herself 'Mrs. Henry Duberly'. In the second edition of the book, published in 1857, the dedication reads, 'To the Soldiers and Sailors of the Crimean Expedition, this Journal is dedicated by an eye-witness of their chivalrous valour and their heroic fortitude.' This time, the *Journal* was signed Frances Isabella Duberly.

Shorn of the complex web of treaties and alliances, the central strategy of the Crimean War was for the Allies, consisting of Britain, France and Turkey, to capture the Russian stronghold of Sebastopol, which would finally bring to an end the Russian empire's expansionist designs. Thanks to the popular press, in particular the reports of William Howard Russell and the dramatic photographs of Roger Fenton, the war initially garnered immense public support in Britain.

Fanny's *Journal* begins at the beginning, when she and Henry embarked at Plymouth on the *Shooting Star* on 25 April 1854, bound for the Bulgarian city of Varna, located strategically on the Gulf of Varna and the principal naval base for the French and British fleets. The voyage out proved eventful: 'Although weakened almost to delirium by sea-sickness and awed by the tremendous force of wind and sea, I could not but exult in the magnificent sailing of our noble ship, which bounded over the huge waves like a wild hunter springing at his fences, and breasted her gallant way at the rate of sixteen knots an hour.' A day later she remarked sardonically: 'How unlike the quiet Sundays at home!'

The *Shooting Star* docked in Constantinople and the couple took the opportunity to explore 'the beautiful city … embowered in trees … a landscape such as I had never hoped to see save in a picture.' The beauty of nature, contrasting with the brutality of war, was a constant theme in the *Journal*.

Her mission might have been brought to an abrupt halt a month later on 25 May if the commander of the cavalry division, Lord Lucan, had had his way. 'Unless Mrs. Duberly had an order sanctioning her doing so, she was not to re-embark on board the *Shooting Star*.' Henry, the soldier, looked upon it as an order. Fanny had a very different notion: 'I look upon it as a woman, and – laugh at it.' Lord Raglan however refused to intervene and Fanny, heavily disguised in a shawl, surreptitiously boarded the ship and settled herself and her horses down for the voyage to Varna. It was not her only lucky escape from the officious Lucan. A few weeks later she recorded: 'Lord Lucan … scanned every woman, to find traces of a lady; but he searched in vain, and I, choking with laughter, hurried past his horse into the boat.'

Fanny's *Journal* is heavy with the name-dropping of the military hierarchy, not least Lord Cardigan himself whom Fanny treats at a respectful but largely amicable distance. She became particularly close to Captain Stephen Lushington, in command of the naval brigade at Sebastopol. There were many others whose dining tables and cabins were graced by the Duberlys: Major de Salis, Major-General Sir George Cathcart, Lord Killeen, Sir Edmund Lyons, Lord George Paulet, Colonel Poulett Somerset, Captain Edward Nolan and a Captain Chetwode, whom Fanny would meet again in India.

The realities of war were not long in making their presence felt. At a luncheon offered by Lord George Paulet, whose hospitality the Duberlys were to enjoy on numerous occasions, Fanny recorded laconically that 'Captain Wallace, 7th Fusiliers, killed yesterday by a fall from his pony, was buried to-day – the first-fruits of the sacrifice!' The consequences of being captured by the Russians were a concern. British soldiers would be treated as felons and sent to Siberia, prompting Fanny's waspish comment: 'if the Russians are as uncleanly, smell as strong, and eat as much garlic as the Turks, it will be the best thing that can happen to us under the circumstances'. The casual brutality of their allies, the Turks, was also the subject of after-dinner conversations; 'they will cut off three or four heads, string them together through lips and cheeks and carry them over their shoulders like a rope of onions'.

Fanny had serious concerns throughout the *Journal* for Henry's fragile health, for the well-being of the ordinary soldier and what she saw as the incompetence of the strategy deployed by the army commanders. Her overriding worry was Henry. 'I am his only comfort. He possesses the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job and the faith of Abraham.' Accommodation was another vexation.

Fanny Duberly was well aware of her social rank and despite the privations of the Crimea, she was determined to maintain the standards befitting a country gentlewoman and the accommodation she was offered, a tent with few facilities, did not fit the bill. This problem was

solved when, one after the other, officers of the High Command offered her comfortable, airy cabins on their ships, conveniently anchored to take advantage of refreshing sea breezes. Servants, or the lack and unreliability of same, was another regular refrain in the *Journal*. Mrs Williams, the sergeant-major's wife, was proving particularly troublesome, showing a marked reluctance to do Fanny's laundry: 'I induced Mrs. Williams … to wash a few of the clothes which had accumulated.' This, complained Fanny, was 'the first assistance she has ever thought fit to render me since I left England'.

The Allies' original strategy was to meet Russian forces somewhere near the Danube but by July the orders had changed; rumour had it that the troops were bound for Vienna. Finally on 16 August, orders came through that the Allies were actually to be despatched to the Crimea. After a twelve-day voyage, Fanny got her first sight of the Crimea on 16 September 1854.

The strategy of the allied commanders, Lord Raglan and Maréchal Jacques Leroy de Saint-Arnaud, to march on Sebastopol, thirty miles away, was rudely interrupted on 20 September 1854 when the Russian cavalry swept out of their impregnable fortress of Sebastopol and occupied the heights of Alma, from which strongpoint they bore down on the massed ranks of the Allied armies. Fanny, aboard the *Shooting Star*, could hear the roar of the guns and fretted for her husband's safety. Fanny's first intimation of the slaughter was her maid – Fanny had managed to find a suitable candidate – bursting into the Duberly cabin with the news that there had been a great battle; 500 English and 5,000 Russians had been killed. Fanny's immediate thought was to obtain hard and fast news of the battle from her military circle, but her enquiries were met with a non-committal shrugging of shoulders. It was not until three days later on 23 September that Fanny obtained any factual information. The *Journal* records her instinctive reaction: '2,090 English killed and wounded; the 7th and 23rd Fusiliers almost destroyed, and, thank God! the Cavalry not engaged. How can timorous, nervous women live through a time like this!' She imagines the terror of death, of lives 'extinguished in a moment; hands flung out in agony, faces calm and still in death; all our prayers unavailing now: no more speech, no more life, no more love'.

Two days later came confirmation of the epic assault on the Russian forces. 'The charge of Highlanders was most magnificent … they swept over the Russian entrenchments like a sea … It is said that the whole garrison of Sebastopol was engaged at the Alma – 50,000 Russians to about 45,000 English and French. I hear the English bore the brunt of the fight.' The Allies' overwhelming numbers ultimately gave them the advantage and the Russians were forced into a tactical withdrawal to their Sebastopol fortress.

It was one of the many peculiarities of the war that after some of the most ferocious fighting and bloody carnage, Fanny was able to take Bob, her beloved grey, cantering over a now deserted battlefield. A few days after the battle of Alma, on one such foray into the countryside, Fanny and Captain Brock (governor of Eupatoria) came across a deserted house in the dining room of which stood a grand piano. For Fanny it was like meeting 'a dear and long absent friend', and she enthusiastically demonstrated her musical skills with a rendition of *Rule Britannia* and Tennyson's *Break, break, break*. A week after her confrontation with the killing fields, Fanny Duberly celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday: 'Thus ends my birthday! – a day ever to be remembered, as on it I saw my first battle-field. How many more shall I see ere I am a year older? Shall I ever live to see another year?'

After the Battle of the Alma, the Allies' new strategy was to attack Sebastopol from the south where it was thought the Russians were more vulnerable and to this end, in late September 1854, British and French forces advanced on the town, to begin a siege that would last the best part of a year.

It was not until 4 October that the *Pride of the Ocean*, with Fanny and the 1st Royals on board, moored at the 'wonderful anchorage of Balaklava'. The pretty harbour met with Fanny's delight, but she was dismayed to learn of the deaths of several senior officers of her acquaintance. There were however some compensations on the social side. Invitations to church, luncheon and supper came thick and fast. At one such supper, Captain Portal offered to ride out with Fanny to view the Russian emplacements in Sebastopol. It was a risky undertaking, as the Russians were a mere 1,000 yards away, well within firing range.

They rode up to the Heights overlooking the city, the allied troops marshalled behind them and in front; the enemy, spraying shots and shells in their direction. For Fanny, it was a moment of intense excitement: 'I could not but feel a high degree of excitement, and I think it was not unnatural. We were standing on the brow of a hill … the doomed city beneath our feet, and the pale moon above: it was indeed a moment worth a hundred years of every-day existence. I have often prayed that I might "wear out my life, and not rust it out," and it may be that my dreams and aspirations will be realised.'

A few days after this liberating moment, Fanny indulged her predilection for satire as Lord Cardigan's majestic private yacht entered the harbour, 'amidst all the rough work of war!' His yacht was 'as out of place as a "London belle" might be.' The mood shifted again within a few paragraphs, as Fanny criticised the lack of recognition towards soldiers committing acts of bravery (the Victoria Cross has its origins in the Crimean war). A rifleman, seeing a shell land near his trench, knocked out the fuse and for this act of bravery was mentioned in general orders. Fanny wondered why it was not possible to award such soldiers some form of decoration even 'a bit of red rag', to wear immediately as an honourable distinction 'instead of waiting for a medal he may never live to obtain, or may only obtain years hence, when it shall have lost half its value'.

It was not the only example of Fanny's compassionate concern for the trials of the ordinary soldier. She tells the touching story of a sergeant (whom she does not name), 'a steady and most respectable man', found dead by his own hand, near the stream. Could he, wondered Fanny, 'have had a foreboding of the lingering deaths of so many of his comrades, and so rashly have chosen his own time to appear before God?'

The following day she took her horse and rode off to survey the British encampment, where the Light Brigade and the 63rd and 68th regiments were preparing for the coming engagement with the Russians. Fanny made her return to camp through the French lines where she claimed to be flattered by the compliments showered upon her by soldiers who had seen few women and especially none as striking as 'the beautiful English Lady with the long flaxen curls'. Several days later Fanny had an unexpected visitor with whom she had a long and interesting conversation. Captain Edward Nolan, A.D.C. to General Airey, was a dashing cavalry officer whose theories on battlefield strategy had ruffled feathers amongst the obdurate high command of the army. Ten days later he was to play a controversial role in the most dramatic exploit of the war.

The bombardment of Sebastopol, a 'fearful rain of shot and shell', began in earnest on 17 October 1854, after three days of constant firing and shelling; the Round Tower in the city was shattered and the French and English fleets poured broadside after broadside at the Russian fortifications. The culmination of the bombardment occurred at ten minutes past three when the Mud Fort (Redan) exploded in a vast cloud of smoke and flame rising high in the air and falling gently to earth, a 'magnificent sight', according to Fanny and an event greeted with cheers and shouts from every throat. Fanny was 'half' swept away by enthusiasm, having seen and heard 'the magnificent din of war'.

Wednesday 25 October found Fanny feeling decidedly out of sorts. Peering out of her cabin at eight o'clock, she was surprised to discover her horse Bob on the beach, saddled and ready to ride. Moments later, she received a note. It was from Henry, telling her to dress with all speed and take to her horse. 'The battle of Balaklava has begun and promises to be a hot one.' Fanny was no stranger to the urgent summons to action. Mounting her horse, she rode as fast as she could through the narrow, crowded streets. Captain Howard told her that the Turks had abandoned their positions and the Russians were advancing with all haste. 'Lose no time,' Fanny is told or you will not make it to the camp alive. Thus began a hectic ride through the retreating Turks until the main road was reached where she was again confronted by a mass of Turks carrying booty from the chaos and confusion.

The Russians had seized three of the Turkish batteries. Ahead, Fanny saw the 93rd and the 42nd in position before Balaklava. The immediate danger was mounted Cossacks heading in their direction. Henry flung saddlebags onto Bob and urged Fanny to head for cover in a vineyard from where it would be safe to watch the action. Moments later Henry joined her, just in time to escape persistent Russian gunfire. In front of her she saw a line of Highlanders, standing in position, rifles raised, as the Cossack cavalry bore down on them. Sir Colin Campbell ordered his men to stand firm, in 'a thin red line'. The odds seemed impossible but the infantry waited until they could see the whites of the Russians' eyes before unleashing volley after volley that covered the hillside in dense acrid smoke. The ground was soon covered with the dead and the dying; a horse, badly wounded, staggered up to Bob and collapsed.

Reinforcements, French and British, were brought up and the cavalry awaited its orders to launch what became 'a matter of world history'. Events were moving almost too quickly for Fanny to take them in, even when recollected in tranquillity. Captain Nolan charged forward recklessly to the front of the Light Brigade, seemingly seizing the initiative from Cardigan. His bravery, or foolhardiness, had only painful death as consequence. Fanny could barely comprehend what was happening. Every bush and every stone seemed to conceal a deadly gun or rifle as fusillade after fusillade of Russian fire was poured upon the advancing cavalry, which charged faster and faster towards the Russian guns. The Light Brigade suddenly turned about and were lost to sight only to straggle back into formation moments later. 'What can those skirmishers be doing?' the *Journal* wondered before realisation swiftly dawned. 'Good God! It is the Light Brigade!'

It was the late afternoon of the same day; the battle was over and Fanny and Henry returned to the scene to view the aftermath of the reckless, valorous charge. Fanny's nerves were shaking as she contemplated the desolation and destruction. 'Ah, what a catalogue!' as her *Journal* recorded. Or as the French General Bosquet was famously to declare: ' C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre. C'est de la folie.' Madness indeed. As ever, horses were a significant concern for Fanny: 'one poor cream-colour, with a bullet through his flank, lay dying, so patiently!' Then there were the dead, from both sides: a Russian soldier, very still in death, the body of a Turkish soldier stretched out in a vineyard. Lord Cardigan, who had now become part of Fanny's increasingly influential circle, told her, several days later, the toll: 300 men, 24 officers, and 354 horses. That night, Fanny struggled to sleep 'but even my closed eyelids were filled with the ruddy glare of blood'.

A curious epilogue to the disaster occurred a few days later on 1 November, when the effects of deceased officers were auctioned off. Fanny records that the prices obtained were 'fabulous'. An old pair of warm gloves fetched £1 7s 0d, a horse went for £12, whilst a common clasp knife achieved £1 10s 0d.

Barely ten days after the disaster of Balaklava, the Russians sought to increase their advantage, believing they had got the allied forces on the run. On the morning of 5 November, Fanny awoke to very heavy and continuous firing lasting all the morning, which heralded the start of the bloodiest battle of the war at Inkerman. She could discover nothing of what was going on until Henry appeared with news at midday. The day had begun with a blanket of fog shrouding the British positions, allowing a surprise attack by the Russians. In the confusion, it was impossible for the commanders to exercise any control of tactics; it was every man for himself, hand to hand fighting, a true 'soldier's war'.

Fanny found it impossible to do justice to the 'horrors and glories of that day'. Overcoming all the hazards that nature had put in their way, 'from five am till three in the afternoon our troops fought with all the *acharnement* [savagery] of wild beasts'. Fanny, in her cabin aboard the *Star of the South*, begged Captain Buckley to accompany her on foot to the front. En route, they met the casualties of the day being borne on the makeshift ambulance carts. For Fanny there were personal losses: the gallant Sir George Cathcart had died a hero's death on the battlefield. His favourite vantage point would soon become his grave. 'Cathcart was a friend of mine and strange to say three days before he met his gallant death, he and I were talking within ten feet of the spot since chosen for his grave.' Next to him lay Major Wynne, 'whose head was taken off by a round shot… We lunched with him two days before', a laconic sentence that seemed to symbolise the bitter irony of the conflict, a handsome lunch followed by death.

The aftermath of the battle was horrific and it was to be two days before Fanny could pluck up the courage to conceive of visiting the battlefield and in the end her usual determination failed her: 'the thought of it made me shudder and turn sick'. She had to rely on Henry to learn of the full horror. 'The bodies of dead and wounded men and horses piled high, in a space no bigger than a square half mile. The field of Alma was child's play to this!' The detail is graphic: 'heaps upon heaps of slain, lying in every attitude, and congregated in masses – some on their sides, others with hands stiffening on the triggers of their muskets … a ghastly and horrible sight!' The total number of casualties amounted to 5,709 Russians killed, wounded or captured, 2,002 British and 560 French.

On 3 December 1854, after the disaster of Balaklava and the bloody battle of Inkerman, Fanny, on board the *Star of the South* reflected on the suffering endured by the wounded and sick and the daily death toll. In a page of Swiftian satire, Fanny described, with bitterness and anger dripping from her pen, the ingredients required to create a 'Model Balaklava' in England. 'Start', she wrote, 'with ruined filthy houses and hovels, add a generous portion of rain and dirt until the whole place resembles a swamp. Season with a thousand plague-ridden Turks and cram them into the hovels, ensuring that at least one hundred die every day. Cast them into shallow graves to rot. Next, collect all the animals, let them die of starvation and let the smell from their rotting bodies befoul the air. From the harbour pick up all the human and animal flotsam and jetsam and pile them all together in the water.' And to round off the little comedy, why not encourage a couple of sailors to enjoy a pipeful of tobacco whilst sitting on the barrels of gunpowder on the quay, 'which I myself saw two men doing to-day'. That, concluded Fanny, was the reality of Balaklava.

By the end of 1854, news of the horrific conditions endured by the troops was reaching Britain, thanks to William Howard Russell and Roger Fenton and, not least, to the letters sent to the press, anonymously, by Fanny Duberly. The combined efforts of these three redoubtable characters prompted an urgent review of the situation by the government, the end result of which was that Florence Nightingale and thirty-eight nurses were to be despatched to Scutari to tend the sick and wounded. Fanny lamented that 'Few people have any notion into what they send their

sons and husbands. If it was all fighting and glory and crash and victory and excitement, it would be all very well, but it is months of misery, death of cold, starvation, sickness, long days and dreary nights, mud, rheumatism and lumbago.' The single positive note is that there had been no cases of insubordination or grumbling among the men, and that, she concluded was 'very fine'.

Throughout the *Journal*, Fanny reserved her most venomous criticism for the lamentable state of the army. By January 1855, a cholera epidemic had been raging for six months amongst the Allied forces. Medical care was inadequate, there was serious lack of ambulances and the men supposed to drive them were either dead or dead-drunk. Fanny watched in fury as the British soldiers were assisted by the more efficient, well-equipped and capable French forces. Even she could do better than this, she reflected. She ended her tirade with one of her most biting outbursts: 'Oh, England! England! blot out the lion and the unicorn: let the supporters of your arms henceforth be, Imbecility and Death!'

January 1855 turned out to be an interesting month for the Duberlys for an entirely different reason. Fanny was in her cabin with Henry, writing a letter. Her task was interrupted by the sudden entry of a sergeant who shouted 'the ship's on fire', a circumstance greatly worsened by the fact that the ship had just taken on 1,000 tons of gunpowder and the fire was no more than six feet away. Fanny's maid was by turns screaming and praying to every saint in the calendar. For her part, Fanny herself saw it as some kind of personal *Götterdämmerung*. 'All felt that their last moment was come; and yet, a strange exultation possessed my heart in contemplating so magnificent a death – to die with hundreds in so stupendous an explosion.'

For some, the horrors of warfare presented an enticing opportunity to combine gruesome tourism and a healthy profit and the London firm of Inman was quick to identify this lucrative new market. For the princely sum of five pounds the company offered a two-week package tour to the Crimea, fully inclusive of all meals and accommodation with the added extras of visits to the delights of Constantinople and special excursions to the popular battlefields. It prompted the fashionable London elite to decamp to the Crimea for the macabre thrill of seeing their fellow countrymen being shot, shelled and blown up in vast numbers, complemented of course by fine champagne and lobster sandwiches, courtesy of Fortnum and Mason's newest and biggest emporium. 'Picnics were the order of the day', wrote one of Fanny's friends, Captain Robert Portal, and the sight of crinoline-clad ladies enjoying the views of the sea from the cliffs became a familiar one.

Unseasonably warm spring weather in March 1855 was the stimulus for a series of horse races to be instigated, christened the 'First Spring Meeting', causing Fanny to remark that she should perhaps entitle her *Journal*; *The Racing Calendar*. The first meeting took place on 5 March with a large turnout of riders and enthusiastic spectators. The day was a complete success with four races concluding with a dog hunt. Fanny rode with them some of the way but she 'could not countenance' the prospect of hunting a dog.

On the same day there was good news about the Duberly accommodation problem. Her great friend and admirer Captain Stephen Lushington had arranged for a hut to be built that would provide the Duberlys with accommodation appropriate to their status, enabling them to receive guests and host receptions. To celebrate the building of the hut, the Duberlys offered their first dinner party, consisting of an excellent soup, fish, hashed venison, roast chicken and a brace of woodcock.

The social merry-go-round continued ten days later, under a brilliant sky, when the Second Spring Race Meeting took place with an impressive list of personnel. Every regiment seemed to be represented, including a contingent of French horsemen. One of the latter, the boastful Comte

Bertrand, amused Fanny with tales of his equestrian skills and descriptions of his mansion, which, he claimed, was fully equipped with ten English horses and there was even an English coachman, Johnson, on hand to attend to his stud. Comte Bertrand was also a dab hand at cards, particularly *écarté* (an old French casino game similar to whist) as he demonstrated at dinner aboard the *Star of the South*. One pleasing outcome of the race meeting was the welcome bonus of an invitation from Comte Bertrand to a splendid supper in which the Duberlys tucked into game pie and champagne.

And whilst all the racing was going on, the business of war continued. The Allies, besieging the Russian fortress, launched a spring offensive against Sebastopol, hundreds of guns bombarding the city but it was a desultory affair. The Russian position appeared impregnable and supplies and ammunition were still getting through to them from the north of the city.

A few days after the official opening of the Duberly hut, on Monday 8 April 1855, Roger Fenton arrived to take his famous series of photographs, one of which showed Fanny mounted on Bob, with Henry placidly holding the horse's halter. Fanny ordered numerous reprints, which she was pleased to see often adorned the tents of both officers and men.

Fanny took advantage of the warm May weather to revisit the 'Valley of Death'. She found it richly carpeted with flowers, dwarf-roses, larkspur and forget-me-nots, 'warm and golden in the rays of the setting sun'. Remnants of the battle remained; carcasses of horses, canon shot, pieces of shell and bleached human bones. In memory of the fallen, whose bodies were once strewn over the battlefield, Henry and Fanny gathered a 'handsful' of flowers.

The arrival in the Crimea of Florence Nightingale and her team of nurses had gone some way to answering Fanny's trenchant criticism of the medical care offered to the wounded and dying. Fanny ventured to that 'stinkhole' Balaklava with the intention of calling on Miss Nightingale. Unfortunately, the heroine of the Crimea was ill with fever and unable to receive visitors. Thus, what would have been one of the most memorable encounters of the entire war failed to take place.

The ferocious second bombardment of the Russian positions in Sebastopol began at dawn on 6 June. The crucial action would begin that afternoon, according to a tip-off Fanny received from the French High Command. 'Make sure you are here at 4 o'clock in the afternoon,' she is told by General Bosquet's adjutant, and you will see the assault on the Mamelon by the massed French cavalry. At three o'clock Fanny returned to see 25,000 French troops assembled to hear General Bosquet's rousing speech to his men, greeted with cheers, shouts and song. In an hour and a half, Bosquet confided to Fanny, indicating the advancing cavalry, 'ces braves seront morts'.

Fanny's position came under attack; a soldier nearby had his head taken off by a canon shot, forcing her to retreat to a more comfortable spot where her horse could graze and she was able to sit on the grass in relative comfort. She gives a thrilling account of the assault on the Mamelon; the Russian guns were silenced and the clatter of musket fire filled the air. The French seized the Mamelon and were now racing towards the second of the Russian batteries, the Malakoff. The British infantry began attacking from the other side of the Heights. Furious Russian fire poured from the Malakoff and as darkness descended, the sky was lit by rockets and gunfire.

The battle continued on the following day; the Malakoff, defended by a 20-foot-wide ditch, resisted the French forces and wholesale burials of the dead hindered the French advance. Thirty-three British officers were killed or wounded. The siege of Sebastopol resumed on 18 June, the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, but the outcome was not as positive. The French and British infantry were rebuffed; casualties were high including many of Fanny's acquaintances and Henry's comrades-in-arms. The most prominent death was that of Lord Raglan, commander-in-chief of

British forces, who had succumbed to illness; news of his death reached Fanny a week later on 29 June.

Into July and the relentless bombardments on the Malakoff and infantry assaults were taking their toll on the Russian defences. The Russian heavy guns were silent and only the rattle of musketry made 'ghastly music in the ear of night'. The end game was in sight. Despite ferocious assaults on the French and British lines, Russian resolve was weakening. On 8 September, as the siege of Sebastopol reached its climax, General Markham had some helpful advice for Fanny: 'Mrs. Duberly, we shall have a fight tomorrow. You must be up here on Cathcart's Hill by twelve o'clock.' The Allies launched an assault on the Malakoff, the principal fortification of Sebastopol, which they successfully captured. Then followed the capture of the Great Redan on 8 September 1855. The following day the Russians retreated from Sebastopol. The siege, which had lasted eleven months, was broken and finally, on 11 September 1855, the signal went out that *Sebastopol est prise.* Sebastopol had fallen to the combined forces of France, Britain and Turkey. Henry and Fanny celebrated with a bottle of Crockford's champagne.

Two days later, on 13 September, Fanny found herself riding at last into the conquered city of Sebastopol. She and Henry looked down from the Great Redan at the half-filled trench below, the last resting place of hundreds of British soldiers. Henry tells Fanny that he was present as Mr Wright read the funeral service for 700 men. Sebastopol was a shattered, ruined city; bodies, many decomposing, 'a heap, a piled-up heap of human bodies in every stage of putrid decomposition, flung out into the street, and being carted away for burial'.

In the days that remained before the couple returned home, Fanny rode into Balaklava and was surprised to find it transformed from the filthy, abject squalor of two months previously: now it was 'fresh, healthy and even pretty'. Fanny Duberly's *Journal* ends with a ringing summary of the campaign, praising the Press as 'our best general' and to it, she affirmed, the army owed an immense debt. It was the press that would carry a full and truthful picture of the war so that every man and woman in Britain will render thanks to the bravery and endurance of the British soldier. Fanny Duberly was being unnecessarily modest; she had made a significant contribution to 'this full and truthful picture'.

The day before his wife's birthday, Henry learned that he had been awarded the Crimea medal and three clasps, issued to those who had seen action in the major battles of the Crimean campaign. Fanny was disappointed not to receive the same honour. On 27 September 1855 Fanny Duberly celebrated her twenty-sixth birthday with a long ride over the Crimean countryside to the Observatory and back, mounted on 'that prince of pretty Indian horses' as she called 'Café au lait' and with that pastoral interlude, Fanny Duberly takes her leave of the reader.

From the very start, Fanny was keen that her *Journal* should reach a wide public and was pleased when a London publisher offered £1,000 for the rights to publication. The Duberlys had left the Crimea, as did so many of the senior commanders, once Sebastopol had been taken. The war dragged on for another year before the Treaty of Paris, signed on 30 March 1856, officially brought an end to the conflict. By then, public interest had dwindled and Fanny rightly saw that her *Journal* would not have the same impact if publication were to be unduly delayed.

The homeward journey of Fanny and Henry Duberly was broken at Portsmouth where they landed on 11 May 1856, to be welcomed and inspected by the Queen. The Queen and her retinue stepped from the royal yacht and went forward to the parade ground where the 8th Hussars were assembled. It was the fourteen-year-old Vicky (Victoria, Princess Royal), who excitedly pointed out Fanny Duberly 'heroine of the Crimea' to her mother. The Queen briefly inclined her head and passed on down the line. It was the only token of royal approval that Fanny received. Fanny

Duberly had a more enduring memorial than a mere medal. Her *Journal* was first published in 1855 and went quickly into a second edition in the spring of the following year, testifying to its popular success.

After several weeks in winter quarters in Ismid, the 8th Hussars were posted to Dundalk in Ireland where they were to spend the next year and a half until the regiment was summoned to a very different theatre of war. The months spent in Ireland were given over to the traditional pursuits of their class: hunting, race meetings and lavish social gatherings. The Duberlys were to leave Ireland weighed down with a considerable burden of debt.