LUCY AND THOMAS ATKINSON:

COMPLICATED LIVES IN RUSSIA AND BEYOND

Lucy Atkinson, Recollections of Tartar Steppes and their Inhabitants (1863; 1972)
Thomas Witlam Atkinson, Oriental and Western Siberia (1858; 1970)
Travels in the Regions of the Upper and Lower Amoor (1860; 1971)

Introduction

This is an update of 'A Little Streak of Wilfulness: Lucy and Thomas Atkinson – Siberia – 1848-53', chapter 1 in Travels in Tandem: The Writing of Women and Men Who Travelled Together *(2012).*

Following that publication, a small group of us, in particular Sally Hayles, researcher into a group of Barnsley artists which includes Thomas Atkinson, and Marianne Simpson, an Australian descendant of Lucy's brother William, continued research into the couple. From time to time, I would send them an updated text incorporating all we had discovered since the previous update.

I had intended, when we felt that we had something like a final text, to publish it as a small book. But in 2013 we were denied access to essential primary sources contained in the Royal Geographical Society archives and in family papers in Hawaii, making it difficult to proceed. In the meantime, Nicholas Fielding, experienced journalist and author, has embarked on a full-scale biography of the Atkinsons which includes following in their footsteps for part of the way and many other aspects outside my scope.

After a meeting with Nick in May 2014, and in consultation with Sally and Marianne, it has seemed best to pass to him my text as it stands here, in the hopes that it might save him duplicating some of our research, and help to enrich what we feel sure will be a worthy account of Lucy and Thomas's travels and complicated lives. We also agreed that I should put my final text on this website.

There is considerable new biographical material at the beginning and end of this updated text, as well as an exploration of the time the Atkinsons spent in Russia – including during the Crimean War – following the travels about which they wrote, and their lives after their return to England. The central part of my text remains the same, with a few amendments, and follows the scheme of the other chapters in Travels in Tandem*, spelt out in the sub-titles to the 'Conclusion' to that book as 'An Unpretending Narrative; So Far as a Woman Could; in her Own Right; Gleaning Only Women's Lore; A Lot More Fun; and The Making of a Woman.'*

I hope you will feel it worth revisiting here the lives of this extraordinary couple. Please let me know at Susanna@holobooks.co.uk if you have anything to add.

I have added a list of acknowledgements following the bibliography, but I must especially thank Sally and Marianne, without whose enthusiasm, research skills and scholarly generosity I would never have embarked on this update.

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Lucy and Thomas Atkinson explored Siberia together, *mostly* on horseback, between 1848 and 1853 – the first English travellers to visit the area and write about it. But in the two books that made him famous in London from the late 1850s Thomas not only fails to mention Lucy's name but he does not even hint at her presence. She is airbrushed out of their great adventure.

Although Lucy does not criticize Thomas's treatment of her in the letters that make up her published account, she does write of his books in her preface*:*

> There is no allusion in them to the adventures we encountered during those journeys, and, especially, there is no mention of the strange incidents that befell myself, often left alone with an infant in arms, among a semi-savage people, to whom I was a perfect stranger. (pvi)

Otherwise, to the unsuspecting reader some of the thoughtlessness he displays is no more pronounced than that of many a travelling man.

It was not the first time she had faced strangeness, however. Lucy Sherrard Finley Atkinson (1817-1893) also writes in her preface, 'Being one of a large family it became my duty, at an early period of life, to seek support by my own exertions.' (pv) Thus, probably in 1840, aged 23, she went to St Petersburg as governess to seven-year-old Sofia *(1833-1880)*, the only daughter of General Mikhail Nikolaievich Muravyev-Vilenski.

Young Englishwomen had been going to Russia as governesses for at least a century – since Elizabeth Justice arrived there in 1734. A German observer, JG Kohl, who was in Russia in the 1830s, recorded,

> Every spring from the same ships that have brought out the new fashions and new books from London, Paris and Lubeck, many young ladies may be seen landing with torn veils and ruffled head-gear. These are the lovely and unlovely … women destined to officiate in Russia as priestesses of Minerva, in fanning the flame of mental cultivation.

You would hardly have gone if you came from a comfortable background with good marriage prospects.

Born in Sunderland, County Durham, to Matthew and Mary Ann Finley, Lucy was the fourth child and eldest daughter of ten children. Her father was a school teacher but he had probably started his career as a mariner. His father and grandfather, both called Robert Finley, had been master mariners. Lucy's grandfather, while mainly involved in carrying coal from the coal-mining and ship-building centre of Monkwearmouth to London, also

crossed the Channel conveying French wines to the British market, and made at least one trip to St Petersburg. It seems likely, therefore, that tales of Russia and, indeed, mementos from there, were part of Lucy's childhood.

Lucy's mother came from Stepney in the East End of London and she and Matthew were married at St Dunstan's there in 1810. The area was well-known for its long association with the sea and it is reasonable to suspect that the link with Monkwearmouth is how Matthew and Mary Ann met. But there is a different possibility: Mary Ann's father was a perfumer and a Mr Finley was advertising his perfumery business in Piccadilly in 1786. Was he a relative of Matthew's?

Although Matthew and Mary Ann moved up to his home place in 1813 and, indeed, several of their children, including Lucy, were born there, they returned to the East End some time between 1824 and 1826. The move may well have had something to do with finances for there is evidence that in 1831 Matthew Finley was an insolvent debtor. Lucy was then 14 years old.

Some time before she went to Russia, Lucy appears to have set up a toy production business at the family home at 4 Waterloo Terrace (that terrace is now 518-554 Commercial Road) in an area, Ratcliffe, then known for its maritime and non-conformist connections. Records show that the venture was in Lucy's name in 1846, when she had been in Russia for some years, but transferred to her mother, Mary Anne's name by 1848. The descendant of Lucy's brother William, Marianne Simpson, who unearthed these records, suggests that Mary Ann had kept the business going in Lucy's name in case she wanted to return to London (as her mother may, indeed, have hoped); but after Lucy's marriage to Thomas Atkinson, she realised that this would not now happen and, accordingly, transferred the business to her own name.

In 1837, not long before Lucy's departure for Russia, and following legislation which introduced the civil registration of births, deaths and marriages, the Finleys registered the births of nine of their children in the Protestant Dissenters Registry – showing not only the family's religious affiliation but explaining why for some time Lucy's birthdate was hard to track down.

Lucy stayed with the Muravyevs for eight years, learning Russian in the process (though the upper classes in Russia tended to speak French). She records conversations held on her Siberian travels. As the daughter of a school teacher she, along with her siblings, appears to have been well-educated, fitting her for work as a governess, and both her background and experience would account for her fine writing style.

In 1846, aged 29, Lucy met Thomas Witlam Atkinson (1799-1861) when he came to St Petersburg. He was 47 and had established himself as an architect, though not without struggles of his own. He was from a modest background but was taken under the wing of the Spencer Stanhope family

of Cannon Hall, Cawthorne, Yorkshire where his father had been head mason and his mother a housemaid. He worked under his father from the age of eight, first as a mason's labourer. Soon he was a skilled stone cutter and then self-taught draughtsman; in his early twenties he was, it is said, walking five miles each way to work as a stone-carver at St George's Church in Barnsley.

He first came to the Stanhope family's notice when he designed a headstone for his mother in Cawthorne churchyard (she died in 1817). Anna Maria Pickering (née Spencer Stanhope) takes the story further in her *Memoirs* (1903): 'At the time of my grandfather's death, he made a design for a tomb for him which showed so much talent that my Uncle Charles sent for him and told him that he had his fortune at his fingers' ends, but not as a mason.' In a letter of 7 May 1825, Anna Maria's mother, Lady Elizabeth Stanhope (née Coke), noted that her husband had introduced the 26-year-old Atkinson to the famous sculptor Richard Westmacott (the younger, an associate of her father). The Stanhopes were to maintain an interest in their protégé until Thomas's death.

With this encouragement, Thomas went to London and 'engaged himself to a good architect'; by 1827 he had a practice as a church architect and he rose rapidly in his new profession, obtaining work and commissions throughout the country, particularly in the Manchester area. Aged 30, in 1829, Thomas published his first work, with Charles Atkinson, on Gothic ornaments, cathedrals and churches, but then his fortunes must have declined: an 1841 record shows that he was in a debtors' prison in London. By 1842 he had been released for in May that year Hamburg was devastated by a great fire and there was work for him there. During his time in Germany, he met the naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt in Berlin and learned of unexplored Siberia; Humboldt had himself paid a short visit there. By a happy chance and, according to Anna Maria Pickering, though not more formal sources, his work was noted and admired by Nicholas I of Russia passing through Hamburg, and in due course – following travels in Greece and Egypt and even further afield- he was invited to St Petersburg. It was there, with a special pass from the Tsar, that his career as traveller and artist took off. He left for Siberia in March 1847. He and Lucy may have had an understanding by then.

He was spotted during his brief stay in Moscow, on the way to Siberia, and pinned on paper in *Russian Chit Chat: or Sketches of a Residence in Russia by a Lady (1856)* by Charlotte Bourne, English governess to Natasha Dolgorukaya, daughter of senator's wife Princess Yelizaveta Dolgorukaya (née Davydov). Charlotte's account was published anonymously, but she was unmasked by the historian of Russia Anthony Cross. She met Thomas at the Dolgorukys several times during his stay and wrote:

> March 3 An Englishman who is going to take views in the Altai called, but did not see him.

March 6 Mr A., the English painter, to dinner: a talented man; has seen India and Egypt, taken views on the Ganges and the Nile. The Indian idol temples much more splendid than the Mahometan ones. Moscow reminds him of a Mahometan town with its many domes. Delhi a fine old town, the ruins are six miles in length. The English society, at St Petersburg, divided into cliques – he preferred the Russian. …

The Princess [Yelizaveta Dolgorukaya] talks of the use she shall make of Mr. A_ son: I don't like the term; she has, however, certainly shown him much attention, with a hospitality worthy of praise.

March 9 Mr A. has sketched in Egypt with the thermometer at 120 Fah; the sky there often red.

March 12 Mr. A_son again: he says the remains of Grecian architecture sink into utter insignificance by the side of those of the Egyptians and the Indians; these two appear to have been formed about the same time; they bear marks of resemblance without seeming to have been taken the one from the other. In the caves of Ellora are obelisks raised, evidently for the same purpose as those in Egypt – the making of astronomical observations. The architecture of the middle ages is more perfect than that of Greece and Rome. The first impression, on approaching the Pyramids, is one of disappointment; the mind cannot take in their immensity. …
… A[tkinson]. E. and M orf to dinner; asked the first whether the character Eothen gives of the Arabs is true? He said he had not found it so. The Greeks a very degraded race, no dependence to be placed on them, but the Turks are a fine nation, and what they have once promised they never fail to perform. He had visited Lord Byron at Newstead; his lordship was often very amiable and agreeable, at other times violent. He brought with him a design for a magnificent Cathedral, to be erected at Manchester.

At first sight, you do wonder if Thomas was not shooting a line about the extent of his travels, but there is little doubt that he did visit those places during the years that are little documented. He was certainly not reticent in expressing his opinions in a way that gives another slant to his personality. M orf was probably Alexander von Middendorff, Baltic German zoologist and explorer. Between 1843 to 1845, on behalf of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences, he travelled to the Taymyr Peninsula and then along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk and entered the lower Amur valley (Chinese territory), all of which would have been of interest to Thomas. Charlotte may have been too shy as a governess to mention her own talent for sketching, though they did have their Englishness far from home in common, and Thomas had already met his future wife, also a governess in an aristocratic family.

Thomas's contemporary, Francis Galton, wrote, in *Memories of My Life* (1908), of the privilege of a pass from the Tsar, at a time when journeys to and within Russia were subject to much constraint, 'Possibly the Tsar wished for unbiased and independent evidence as to certain matters in South Siberia and Atkinson may have acted as a secret agent.' (p76) Certainly much of what Thomas described would have been of interest to the Central Government; and the Tsar

was to show his appreciation with gifts of jewellery, the first a ruby ring. Some information, such as visits to armament factories and details of the border between Siberia and Chinese Turkestan, would also have interested the British Government, as part of the so-called Great Game. Evidence that this was so comes from the manuscript volumes of Foreign Office records in the British Library. On 30 October 1846, Andrew Buchanan, Chargé d'Affaires, British Embassy, St Petersburg, wrote to London; it was recorded as follows:

> Mr Atkinson an English artist intends travelling in Siberia and the Altai, by the Emperor's orders every facility has been afforded him. Mr Atkinson will be accompanied by an Englishman who has resided in this country, they will go to Kiachta and penetrate as far as possible into China, Mr Buchanan has pointed out to Mr Atkinson several objects of political and commercial interest respecting which HM Govt. would be glad to receive information.

The Foreign Office which had received Buchanan's letter on 9 November, replied to him on the 10th, 'Thanks of HM Govt to be expressed to Russian Govt. for facilities given to Mr Atkinson to visit Siberia.' None of those involved could have known then that the two countries would soon be at war, though the war had already taken place when Thomas wrote in the acknowledgements to *Oriental and Western Siberia*, 'From Mr Buchanan, our late minister in Denmark, I received much assistance in procuring the emperor's permission, for which I take this opportunity of recording my gratitude.'

At the end of 1847**,** or early the following year, Thomas returned from Siberia and married Lucy in the new year (18 February) in the chapel of the Russia Company and British Embassy in Moscow. One of the witnesses was Euphrasia Morrison (?1811-1902?) who seems to have lived in St Petersburg with her brother William and his wife Margaret; the Morrisons had married in the same chapel in 1844. The connection still proves elusive but could Euphrasia or Margaret be the friends to whom Lucy was about to write from Siberia? It would have been easier to get letters to and from St Petersburg than elsewhere. There is evidence, however, that the letters were a literary device.

Three days later Thomas set off back to Siberia taking Lucy with him. He does not mention breaking off his Oriental journey; he does not even hint that he was married, nor that for the next five years he was accompanied by a wife and, nearly nine months after that second journey began, a child. He writes only, 'Passing by the long winter I will speak of Barnoul in the spring-time. I ought to call it early summer.' (p277) That is when he arrived back in Barnoul with Lucy, on 7 June, as is shown in the chronological table in her book and in her letters; he was not there that winter at all.

Why did he suddenly go back to Moscow and marry Lucy, and then take her on his travels? Was it because he could not live without her? There may have been an element of that. Was it that she spoke Russian and he found he could not manage without an interpreter he could trust implicitly? Was it that over her years with the Muravyevs she had built up a little nest egg? Was it that as a self-educated man he felt an educated woman would help in his ambition of eventual

publication? Was it that he wanted a travelling housekeeper? Perhaps it was lonely work travelling in the depths of a barbaric country for months on end. But would she not have held him up and even more so if a baby was to be born? And why did he fail to mention her in his narrative? Must it have been to emphasise that he had undertaken, alone, a long, hazardous and totally original journey - one that required great reserves of manly strength, stamina and courage? Or was there another reason? Did he fail to mention Lucy in his books because he was already married to someone else?

Following their return to England, they lived in London, at Hawk Cottage, Old Brompton Road, described by Francis Galton as 'picturesque but ramshackle' where Thomas published his books, and basked in the acclaim which followed. When Thomas died in 1861 Lucy applied to the treasury for some money owed to her husband. It was then she discovered that the wife he had married in 1819, and whom he must have told her was dead (he is described as a widower in the register of marriages now in the Guildhall, London) was, in fact, alive. Rebecca (Rebekah) Atkinson, described by Galton as occupying 'a different grade of society', had not, apparently, heard of him for some years, until she was told by a friend of his death; thus she resurfaced.

And it was then that Thomas and Lucy Atkinson's smart London friends such as Galton confirmed that 'Atkinson had avoided bringing his wife (as we thought of her) to the forefront, and it had been remarked at the time of the publication of his book of travels that he made the scantiest references to her, and never used the word "wife".' (p176/7) Those 'scantiest references' are beyond detection.

This makes one look at Lucy and Thomas Atkinson's writing with new eyes. Lucy's account of their travels was published two years after his death and it proved a time-bomb to his reputation, for in her simple and open account is an unspoken refutation of much that he claimed about his adventures in new areas; and the information about the Amur area he wrote that he collected on the border between the far east of Siberia and north eastern China was later said to be plagiarism from an earlier source. Nick Fielding, who has commented on my draft just before this final version, regards later judgement on Thomas's account as 'very harsh'.

The question is, did Lucy know what she was doing? It seems unlikely, from what little we have to go on, that she was a party to the bigamy, so she had already lived through the hurt and humiliation that must have followed his death. Did she publish her letters, with their definite chronology and unvarnished details, knowing that her account would expose him to any but the most casual reader?

There is no hint of that in the small cache of unpublished letters in the archives of her publisher, John Murray, starting in January 1862. She writes openly of financial difficulties; indeed Murray offers her guidance. But of any other troubles there is just a hint in a letter of 26 June 1862 when the publisher is waiting for more of her manuscript:

> Pray do not think I have been spending my time idly. Since I saw you I have had a good deal of trouble and anxiety. That is over for the present, and

> whatever comes in the future, I trust it will not produce the same effect upon me. I tried hard to collect my thoughts to write, but I could not do much, and threw my pen down in despair. Last Monday I resumed it, and I hope nothing more will come to interrupt me for a while.

And Lucy ended about the manuscript 'I could have said more, but I fear not to be quite correct and as this is not fiction, it is better to write only of what I am quite sure.'

What writing of her travels Lucy had to draw on is ambiguous from her correspondence with John Murray for, in her first letter, she observes: 'In the style I have sent you I can write more letters, equally if not more interesting.' And yet she writes in her preface that her work consists of 'letters written on the spot to friends … with slight omissions and alterations.'

Lucy's book, republished a century later, in 1972, with an introduction by Anthony Cross, has come into its own, partly as a result of his careful research. He suggests of Thomas Atkinson's books, on the simple level of style, that they 'pale before the fresh and unpretentious work of his wife.' (px) and that her account 'lacks none of the excitement of [his]; it only gains in comparison.' Once again, Nick Fielding strongly disagrees. He will doubtless substantiate his view in his own account. It is certainly true that one should not forget Thomas's modest background, so that his books and paintings should be regarded with a certain awe.

Cross's opinion is interesting in another way for, as an academic male, he might be expected to prefer the more consciously literary and scholarly style of the man so anxiously seeking to establish himself in an age of writing about exploration.

Atkinson does more than fail to mention Lucy in his narrative: he concertinas time and fuses events, so that he only describes leaving Moscow once, in March 1847, when, in fact, he did so twice, again in February 1848 with Lucy. Although Cross suggests that the first 300 pages of Thomas's *Oriental and Western Siberia* cover the period when Lucy was not with him, at least one incident described by Thomas supposedly at the beginning of his first journey, is so similar to Lucy's description of the same incident on his second, that they must surely be the same occasion. Considering only Lucy's account, it says much about his attitude, which she never spells out, perhaps because she did not expect it to be different, or she was a clever enough writer to know that she did not need to.

They arrive at Nijni Novgorod (named Gorky from 1932-1991). In his narrative she is not with him; in truth she was hardly there either. Lucy writes:

> On arriving at the ancient town of Nijni Novogorod, I was pleased to find that we should pass the night there, as I had a great desire to see this place. We drove to an hotel in the lower town, dirty in the extreme, and were taken into a small room. I was horrified at finding that everything must be taken out of the sledge. I asked whether it would not be better to proceed at once. Such could not be, Mr Atkinson having promised to call on Prince Ourousoff, the governor of the town. After partaking of some

> refreshment, I gladly spread the bear-skins, and stretched my limbs, which felt a little stiff. (p8)

And Thomas's version:

> Having a letter to the governor, Prince Ouroussoff, I determined to stay a few hours and deliver it, also to stroll through this ancient city, … Entering the lower town I was taken to a sort of inn on the banks of the Volga; but as my stay was to be short it mattered little what accommodation it afforded. All those travellers who expect to find a Russian host very attentive to his guest will be disappointed. My postillion led the way upstairs, and showed me a whole flat of pens or private boxes in a filthy condition, and with very little furniture; these were formed by dividing large rooms with inch and a half boards. My luggage was brought upstairs, as it could not be left with safety in the sledge. After a wash my man succeeded in getting (with some difficulty) breakfast. Having dispatched this meal I got into a sledge and paid my visit to the governor, who received me with much kindness, and insisted on my dining with him. ... Having spent a few pleasant hours, I returned to my dirty room, intending to get, if possible, a good night's rest, and start at daylight. At this place they provided neither bed, mattress, pillows, nor sheets; a bedstead there was with a boarded bottom on it. I rolled myself up in my fur and prepared to sleep. (pp19/20)

The brevity and lack of colour in Lucy's account - normally bouncy and full of detail - tells the reader everything about her memories of that sordid inn and suggests much about their relationship - at least at that stage; they had recently been married. From Thomas's account one supposes that the squalidness of the place enhanced his feelings of being a stoic traveller. He ignores Lucy's obviously mild request - she does not complain to him of the filthy box-like room, but of the problems of bringing all the luggage up - to travel on because he has a letter of introduction to the governor. He leaves Lucy cold and tired after hours in a sledge over a pot-holed track to curl up in her furs, while he goes off to talk to the governor.

In both accounts, their journey onwards is delayed by the impassable state of the way ahead, and in both there is a meal with the governor; but in Lucy's account she is there! Could Thomas really have had two such very similar experiences? What is more, Lucy usually mentions when they visit someone with whom Thomas has become acquainted on the earlier part of his travels; she does not do so here.

It is clear from the start of Lucy's account that she was not only expected to rough it, but was more than prepared to do so. Because she is writing chronologically and, to some extent, at the time (in detail if not as in the published version), a fine climax to the ultimate example of this comes naturally. The scene is set by some remarks which suggest on the surface only an attitude of determination to keep up and not be a little woman, especially *vis-à-vis* their Cossack guide Alexae. There is a river to cross, one of many, this time only a stream during a stroll. Lucy tells how:

> I was standing, deliberating whether it was worth the dirtying of my boots, when I felt myself gently lifted over. I turned round, presuming it was my husband, but no! there was Alexae wandering off in another direction;
>
> I ungenerously felt a little indignant, for I had made the remark to my husband that he always treated me as a child, and this act was a confirmation of my impression. (p70)

A few pages later it was the end of that particular stretch of what was to be a five-year journey and Lucy writes of how Alexae said :

> ... with a look of pity, 'You must be very tired.' I said 'No, indeed I am not.' 'Well,' said he with astonishment, 'We are men and accustomed to riding, and you are not; there is not another lady could have done as you have done. And now that the journey is over, I have often wondered how you could go through all you have gone through.' This was sincere praise, and I can assure you I felt not a little proud to have merited it. (pp83/4)

A little later in that letter Lucy writes, 'I began this in October, and it is now the 14th November; you will naturally wonder what has prevented my finishing it; I am going to tell you.' (p105) And so she does:

> You must understand that I was in expectation of a little stranger, whom I thought might arrive about the end of December or the beginning of January; expecting to return to civilisation, I had not thought of preparing anything for him, when, lo! and behold, on the 4th November ... he made his appearance. The young doctor here said he would not live more than seven days, but, thank Heaven, he is still alive and well ... the doctor says the premature birth was caused by excessive exercise on horseback.

If her son Alatau was due at the end of December, he was conceived at the beginning of April when they were already on the road. For the next seven months - he was two months premature - the journey was hardly one that a Victorian wife might have expected to undertake; even an early twenty first century one, who might go to the office full time until the day before delivery, might have baulked at it. Yet Thomas, if he suggested returning to Moscow or St Petersburg or even settling in Barnoul during Lucy's pregnancy, was turned down by this woman who, until then, had presumably led a rather sedentary life and who was having her first child far from family or competent doctors. She writes of the doctor available in Kopal, deep in the Alatau Mountains, now in Eastern Kazkhastan:

> Doubtless, seeing I speak of the doctor, you imagine we have a competent one here. Far from it, he is but twenty-three years of age; theoretically he may be clever, practically certainly not. When my husband applied to him in my case, he declared he had not the slightest knowledge of anything of the kind. (p106)

Alatau Tamchiboulac Atkinson was the only baby born that winter in Kopal who survived.

Lucy's description of the journey that ended in Kopal not only gives some indication of what she went through; there are also hints in it of a relationship between wife and husband that had tenderness and important moments of laughter together. They had set out one morning with one of the guides saying that the distance to be covered before they could stop was 40 versts, the other 60. Lucy writes, 'I was quite capable of doing either'. But both estimates were completely false and she had to confess that at 2 o'clock in the morning - they had been travelling since seven the previous morning:

> I said I could not go farther without rest; I was likewise so cold that I could scarcely hold the reins of my horse, as there was a cutting wind blowing from the snow mountains. I now dismounted, trembling with cold, having nothing on me but my dress, my warm jacket having been lost that day by coming unstrapped from my saddle; they gave me a bear's skin to lie down upon, and my husband's shube to cover over me. We had about a pint of rum, which we took with us as a medicine; my husband would insist upon my taking a little, when I drank about half a wine-glass full pure, without its taking the slightest effect upon me, further than I felt revived. He now sat down beside me; after sitting about half an hour I began to get warm, I then dozed off for a few moments, when our guide came to say we must go on or we should be all lost; without water the horses could not proceed after the sun rose. I got up, and felt so much refreshed, that I could go on again. My husband then fastened his shube around me with his belt, and got me with some difficulty stuck on to my horse, for the shube was such an unwieldy thing; then he tied a bear's skin round himself and away we went quite gaily, laughing at our singular costumes. Two hours more passed away, and then I found my strength begin to fail me. I dismounted and walked about a hundred paces; I again got on to my horse and another hour passed over, when I said, 'I cannot sit my horse longer,' and begged they would go on and leave me, and if they found water to return and bring me some. I once more descended and walked a little distance and again mounted. My husband now held me by the hand, in the other I kept the reins, but that was all, I had no power to guide my poor horse. We now saw a thin streak of light appear on the steppe, and knew that day was breaking. I heard the barking of several dogs; no music ever sounded so sweetly in my ears. I cheered up, grasped the reins of my horse and rode on quite briskly; and at five, or a little after, we got to an aoul belonging to a poor Moolah. I was lifted off my horse by the women and actually carried into the yourt; they commenced rubbing my hands and feet, placed cushions and carpet for me to repose on. I asked for water, but Peter told me it was unfit to drink.' (pp100/102)

One wonders if Thomas Atkinson can be entirely blamed for his wife's suffering. She does not seem to have possessed the attributes myth attaches either to Victorian ladies or put-upon governesses. Before the events just described, Lucy confesses that:

> Some of the good ladies of the place ... entered, and advised, before completing our arrangements, that we should discuss the journey over a cup of tea feeling assured they would be able to show the impossibility of my continuing it; they had heard of the great horrors and miseries endured by some of the wives of the Cossacks who had but lately crossed the steppe

> with their families on their way to the new fortress. They were convinced I should die ere I reached the place. I laughed at their fears, and assured them that it would cause me much anxiety to be left behind, and, even though they told me that death would be my lot if I went, still I was firm to my purpose. You know I am not easily intimidated when once I have made up my mind. I started on this journey, with the intention of accompanying my husband wherever he went, and no idle fears shall turn me; if he is able to accomplish it, so shall I be. I give in to no one for endurance. (pp87/88)

By then, 9 July 1848, Lucy must at least have suspected she was pregnant. But had she told Thomas? Women play a large part in her narrative and their reaction to him suggests he was not totally thoughtless, for Lucy writes of the women among whom she moved just before the incident where she could take no more: 'What struck them most with astonishment was the attention paid me by Mr Atkinson, as our sex is looked upon by the Kirghis as so much inferior to the "lords of creation".' (p92)

Lucy was attuned to the position and treatment of women in Khirgis society and she wrote in her introduction,

My friends have so often importuned me to give them some account of what happened to me in countries where an English lady had never been seen before, and to describe the manners which characterise female society among the wild Kirghis, that I have bethought myself to collect some of the letters written on the spot to friends. (pvi)

She was true to her word but it is hardly plain description: she is not slow to add good strong comments that marry her own position with theirs. She describes how on one occasion her horse, Columbus, ran away with her, and when he had finally calmed down and their guide caught up with her; she writes:

> ... the man patted me on the back, and gave me to understand how proud he was of me; then he showed me what a Kirghis woman would have done under similar circumstances. First, he commenced screaming, and almost set my horse into another fright, and concluded by falling from his horse. He remounted, and again patted me with evident delight. ... On reaching our party, I received so many congratulations at my safe return, as also for my bravery, that I verily believe, if we had stopped longer in the steppe, a woman would not have been looked upon as such a contemptible being as they consider her to be; for the men now began to notice me, a thing they had scarcely deigned to do before. (p191)

On another page she writes of Alatau:

> How lucky it is that he is a boy, and not a girl; the latter are most insignificant articles of barter. I am scarcely ever looked at excepting by the poor women, but the boy is somebody ... he is to be envied, lucky boyl Why was I not born a boy instead of a girl? - still, had it been so, I should not have been the fortunate mortal I am now - that is, the wife of my husband and the mother of my boy. But, I pray you, do not make them acquainted

with my feelings; they are both capable of taking advantage of the knowledge you would impart. (p153)

And again:

> And a mother ...: as the hour of her accouchement draws nigh, it is stated she is possessed of the devil, and they beat her with sticks to drive him away; and as the moment approaches, they call on the evil spirit to leave her. Poor woman! her lot in a future existence, it is to be hoped, will be an easier one, as here she is a true slave to man, contributing to his pleasure in every way, supplying all his wants, attending to his cattle, saddling his horse, fixing the tents, and I have even seen the women helping these 'lords of the creation' into the saddle.
>
> My husband says the Kirghis have opened his eyes to what is due to husbands, and he is half inclined to profit by the lesson; and even thinks of opening an institution to teach husbands how to manage their wives, and believes it might be made a profitable concern. …
>
> Do fancy, for a moment, what a position a woman fills. A dog is even considered her superior. When a favourite one is going to have pups, carpets and cushions are given her to lie upon; it is stroked, caressed, and fed upon the best of everything. Women alone must toil, and they do so very patiently. One Kirghis, seeing me busy sewing (indeed I was occupied in making a coat for my husband), became so enamoured of my *fingers* that he asked Mr Atkinson whether he would be willing to sell me; he decidedly did not know the animal, or he would not have attempted to make the bargain. With me amongst them, there would shortly have been a rebellion in the camp. (pp154/55)

Lucy's humorous insertions concerning her own husband are an important commentary on her relationship with him - even if the whole of her account can also be seen as an Englishwoman noting gross abuse of women in traditional society and failing to appreciate her own position and that of other Englishwomen in their more 'civilised' setting. She, who has some consciousness of herself as a woman, is able to laugh rather than bridle. That suggests that, however much she devotes herself to him, and she does assiduously, he does see her as a person in her own right. Perhaps that is why he did not insist on mollycoddling her when she was so determined to go with him. That hypothesis is consistent with his attitude towards women in general, as it appears from his own account - though he does refer to women as 'the softer sex', (p114) He describes how, at the beginning of his first journey, before Lucy was with him, he sought shelter, communicating with a dictionary, with a Siberian family:

> I was placed at the head of the table, the good man at one side, and I naturally expected his amiable spouse would take a seat opposite to me, instead of which she walked to the end of the room and sat down; but, having refused to partake of their hospitality unless she would sit by us, the lady was induced to make one of the party, after which everything went on well. ... Finally, as a finish to our repast, my host brought in a bottle of champagne, and two glasses on a tray, evidently intending that he and I

> should drink it alone; but here I was forced to disappoint him, for, as soon as he had filled a bumper for me, I could not help presenting it to his wife, evidently to her great surprise and pleasure. Another glass was brought for me, and we then very deliberately proceeded to finish the bottle. (p32, Siberia)

Lucy's attempts to glean women's lore were not always successful; she writes of an occasion in Kopal:

> Colonel Keil (the officer in command of the Cossacks) called upon us and invited us to tea; he was a most gentlemanly man; we spent several hours with him; my husband gained, much information from him; but, unfortunately, I was the guest of the wife, and from her I would defy anyone to gain information upon any subject, excepting it might be dirt! and on this point I fancy her information would be original. (pp50/1)

And, of course, gleaning only women's lore had other drawbacks too:

> What rendered our little expedition here most agreeable was the presence of two or three ladies who had accompanied their husbands for the summer. Still it sometimes prevented me seeing all I should otherwise have seen, as without them I might have wandered about everywhere, and now I was obliged to associate with my sex, not that I was sorry to do so, but it debarred me from seeking novelty. (p233)

Some reasons for Lucy's travelling - and the ways in which she felt fulfilled by it - have been established: she had married, relatively late, an adventurous man and she was anxious to be with him; she liked to learn new things; she was interested in people and found the women where she travelled particularly fascinating; she loved nature. She writes, for example, of holding the party up while she picks wild flowers - though she regrets that she is not a botanist like Thomas who sprinkles Latin tags liberally. What also emerges is that she also had a dream of visiting Siberia. She and General Muravyev had discussed it long before there could be any question of her going there, for he had a family connection with the Decembrist revolutionaries of 1825 in exile there.

Lucy's account of intentional meetings with several exiles, and indeed stays among them, is invaluable to the historian of that period and her detailed observation of them and their conditions and her compassion are more attractive than her husband's perfunctory comments.

Other small details show her to have contributed more to the five year venture than her obstinacy and ability to endure. Early on, Thomas's retainer proved himself hopelessly unreliable and Lucy took over papers and money; she was now installed in 'my new office of "minister of finance".' (p6) It was she who had found the maps in St Petersburg with which Thomas had originally started out and it was she who procured fresh horses at the post stations when they were travelling by sledge. She took her turn in keeping watch at night when there was danger and she took part in the evening rifle and pistol practice. 'I hope, however,' she wrote, 'that I shall not be called upon to use any of my weapons in defence.'

(p21) Among the snippets of family lore that survive is that Lucy always carried a gun or pistol – one assumes only when travelling.

Later she gained kudos in front of a Kalmuk man for bringing down a squirrel; indeed, she was patted on the back for it. So elated was she at the renown she acquired that she resolved to shoot the bear that had been trespassing into the camp but the bear failed to oblige her. She was an excellent rider – which she did astride - admired even by the Kalmuks, riders par excellence, and she always looked after her own horse when there were dangerous passages on foot to traverse. Where and how she had learnt to shoot and ride are questions that remain unanswered.

Here is Lucy's description of other responsibilities that became hers:

> Remember, it was not as it was in Petersburg, where I had only my own 'traps' to attend to! I had, in the first place, to separate what would be necessary for us in the Steppe, from the clothing we should leave behind. Then there were dry provisions to think of and to purchase, as in the place we were going to there was nothing at all to be obtained, excepting sheep, and they not always; then all these were to be packed, and so contrived as to occupy the very smallest compass possible ... (p49)

And when they were travelling there were her day-to-day duties:

> We rode for ten hours over burning sand without stopping; which, together with the intense heat of the sun, rendered me almost dead with headache. The reflection affected Mr Atkinson's eyes very much. When we were encamped, I was so very ill that I became a little alarmed. How gladly would I have lain down! But it could not be. I had Alatau to wash and bathe, which I usually did whilst the tent was being got ready, and the camels unloaded; and this ended, I had the bed to make, - how I knelt down to it, I scarcely know. After this was done I fed the boy and put him to bed. We were exceedingly systematic in all our arrangements; each one had his allotted task; no one was idle; and there was no hurry or confusion. Having performed my duties, and seen my husband seated at his tea, I lay down on a bearskin, and thought never to rise again; but after a sound sleep I was all right, and ready for my breakfast a little after five, having fasted for twenty-four hours, and had a fatiguing day's ride. We never allowed Alatau to suffer if we could avoid it. (pp199/200)

There was more to Thomas's ill-health than eyes troubled by glare; it would be a mistake to think it was only Lucy who suffered from fatigue or sickness, through pregnancy or otherwise. There are numerous instances told by them both of him succumbing to fever or some injury. But they both had a strong streak of obstinacy that must have formed an important bridge in their relationship. She admits to 'a little wilfulness in my disposition'. (pp46/7) and says of him that 'my husband does not permit impossibilities without proving them to be so himself.' (p162) But there was more to it than obstinacy for him. Early in his trip, before Lucy was with him, he writes of one occasion when 'At times I almost feared we

must give in, but my English spirit said No, and on I went, determined not be beat by my woodsman.' (p39)

Her driving force is a little different. At one moment of extreme danger she observes that Thomas 'started bidding me to lie down and keep quiet, but such was not my nature. If I were to be captured I was determined to see how it was managed. ...'(p183)

Lucy was by no means all toughness and roughness. The sight of her son or a stricken deer or both with their heads on the same pillow in innocence, or wild flowers, inspire her to lyricism; and she had her moments of maidenly modesty, too; but she conquered them:

> I have not told you of the many rapid streams we had to cross; some where we had all to ride together the one to bear the other up. The Khirgis, invariably placing me in the centre, and clutching my dress, seemed determined to take care of me. Some of the streams were broad and deep. When it was so, I used to retire behind the reeds or rocks, as the case might be, and, stripping, put on my bathing gown, with my belt round my waist; and tying my clothing into a bundle, boots and all, I jumped on to my horse – merely holding tight on to him with my legs, there being no saddle – and swam him across in the company of a Kirghis, he gallantly carrying my bundle for me; when I would again retire with my bundle to re-equip myself. These are the sort of things we have to do in traveling. At first I used to feel (I will not say timid, but) my heart beat quicker; now I think nothing of it. I am vastly altered since leaving Petersburg. (p190)

He writes on the same subject specifically rather than generally:

> After this escape from wind we were soon on the bank of the Yeljin-saw-gash, a broad and deep stream, over which we must swim our horses. We undressed and took off our saddles; my clothing, and my sketches and fire-arms, were carried over on the heads of the Kirghis, some of whom swam their horses four and five times across the river. (p472)

No Lucy, and yet she illustrates her book with a sketch of a similar scene that includes her and is probably by Thomas. And the pin-pointing of that occasion is misleading. It is virtually impossible to follow the way Thomas cuts his narrative about, the way he re-stitches not only chronology but the direction in which he is travelling. It would be tedious to devote space to the many details of that phenomenon but one example is necessary to give a feel of the problem and enough evidence to suggest a reason or reasons.

It is clear that occasionally Lucy was persuaded to stay behind; she admits it and always regrets it. She wrote of 1852:

> I have been induced, through the very urgent entreaties of our friends, to allow my husband to go alone this summer to ascend the Bielouka. I consented the more readily, as I had visited the regions round about before; and, besides, Colonel Sokolovsky had intended joining him in this excursion

> ... He now tells me he regrets much that I did not go, as I have missed some fine scenery; and besides, he says, he missed his companion. He also missed the little arrangements I was able to make for our comfort; I always tried to do this, though scarcely able, at time, to move from fatigue. .... All in Barnaoul had spoken of the terrors of a journey to Bielouka, but in his letter to me he says: 'It is only imaginary, and you have gone over places ten times more difficult.' ... I wept to think that I had, against my own inclination, yielded to the advice not to go with him; that storm, as he now describes it to me, I would have given some years of my existence to have witnessed. (p316)

Thomas, on the other hand, so far as one can work out his dates, describes an adventurous and original visit in 1852 to the Gobi desert, over the border into China, via a border town which he calls Tchoubachack (more commonly known as Chuguchak). He says on page 469 of Oriental and Western Siberia that his party passed 'about ten versts to the north of Tchoubachack, a Chinese town, in which Russia has, since this period, established a consul ... we passed Chinese pickets about noon on the second day.' That is all he says, and the description of crossing the river just quoted comes a few pages later. He writes as if he has never been there before. And yet we know from Lucy, from an interesting two days which she describes in detail, that he was there with her in 1849.

She writes, 'On the 9th of August we arrived at a Chinese piquet close to Choubachack, or, as they called it, Chougachac. Falstaff [the nickname for a guide] tried to dissuade us from going on, as he had been told by a Tartar that the Chinese would make us prisoners; I laughed at his cowardice.' (p193) They were not hindered; instead, they had a cordial meeting, at which sweetmeats and tea were served, with a group of Chinese officers. What is more, there is a sketch of the occasion reproduced in Lucy's book - with him and Lucy on stools and Alatau in the arms of the senior officer. It is fair to assume that it is by Thomas, since it appears to be by the same hand as another scene which Lucy describes him sketching; interestingly, both feature Lucy, so absent from his published writing, as well as that of a river crossing just described.

Of Chougachac, Lucy writes, too, of an emissary that visited them the following day, 'They said we were the first English who had ever presented themselves in this part of China ...' No permission being available to enter the town, Thomas was told that if he shaved his head and dressed like a Tartar merchant he could slip in 'but to this he would not consent, as an Englishman he would visit the place or not at all.'

Thomas mentions none of it, relating either to 1849 or 1852 when, given his tendencies to chop chronology, he could easily have inserted such an unusual sequence of events into his narrative, simply leaving out Lucy and his son. Soon after his brief mention of Chougachac, Thomas describes meeting and drawing Sultan Beck and his family (p475); but Lucy met them in 1849. (p205)

There may sometimes be some simple explanations for why they do not describe the same events – if one simply reads the book and speculates. First, he may not have intended at the beginning to take notes on which to base a book - he was,

after all, primarily concerned with making sketches, painting landscapes and providing a commentary on his work. Knowing that she was writing detailed letters, did he tend to leave out of his notes what she had covered? On the few occasions when she was not with him he mentions writing up his journal; the storm he wrote to her about is an example. Is it that he prefers to describe for his readers difficult journeys undertaken when he was alone, or did he make more copious notes when he was alone? Did he have more time to write up his journal when there were no domestic distractions?

But then there is Lucy's 26 June 1862 letter to her publisher John Murray: 'You bid me not to touch upon the subjects my husband had already written upon. I believe I have obeyed, at least I have tried to, to the letter.' One can sometimes come unstuck with biographical and literary speculation, even though, in spite of Lucy's efforts they do often enough write about the same events.

There are several possible answers to the mysteries of chronology, omission, inclusion and distortion in his book. 1. He had married Lucy bigamously (but that did not mean he had to distort the details of nearly every journey). 2. He was spying for the Tsar or for the British Government, or both, and wished for one reason or another to obscure his real routes. 3. He wished to show what an intrepid explorer he was - but, again, why the distortions which do not support that explanation? 4. His notes were such a jumble that he himself lost the true thread. 5. He rearranged the order for reasons of style, to make a good story. He was not always very successful if that was the reason.

It would be unfair and inaccurate to call Thomas Atkinson's Oriental and Western Siberia tedious - but there are patches of tedium. That tendency is even more marked in the second book which has been accused of plagiarism. The same applies to humour. He was not without it; the following anecdote shows that. He is spending the night with strangers in Siberia on his first journey; his hosts question him incessantly:

> They talked very fast, however, and I listened attentively, saying ("Dah!" "Neate") Yes or No, in Russian as the case appeared to require. At length I got tired of this, and began an oration in English, speaking as fast as I could, by which I got the advantage, for they ceased immediately. But the moment I left off addressing the chair, one or other began to catechise me again. As a last resort, I was driven to try some snatches of poetry, which fairly silenced them. (p49)

But he does take himself seriously. The extract quoted earlier about their visit to Nijni Novgorod shows that. His writing tends to be impressionistic, while Lucy's is factual. He has a feeling for history, and progress; Lucy has a sense of the immediate. He is very conscious of style. He takes risks with pace sometimes which are probably necessary, given the density of his narrative, but it can be disconcerting. He has the soul of a poet, or craves the soul of a poet, and carries it into his relationships with those he meets. Lucy tells of their guide Peter:

> I surnamed him the Great for he was one of the most consummate liars I have ever met with; my husband said not so! He was only a poet; his

> imagination was of a lively nature, he had an answer for everybody and a reason for everything. (p97)

Lucy stands no nonsense in her life or her writing. She tells her story straightforwardly, as it was, from her viewpoint. She is without pretension. She is prepared to say, 'I do not pretend to tell you ...'(p186) And:

> The art of writing is a great boon to us, and I often bless the discoverer of it; as by our pens we are able to convey to those far from us some of our thoughts and feelings. Still, in comparison, how little it is we can say of all that happens to us ...

He pretends, as we have seen. She tells a good story naturally – though it is clear from her correspondence with her publisher that she re-wrote and polished; he has to work at it. She may even have been less guileless than it appears.

And what did they both get out of the journey? She says in a passage already quoted, 'I am vastly altered since leaving Petersburg.' Earlier she had written, 'Many a good lesson have I learnt on this journey ... on our first arrival here I was dainty.' (p123)

She was a surprising woman when she started out, and she did not have the usual rigidly ethnocentric Victorian attitudes to people in 'uncivilised' societies; she was able to establish relations with them which were a little maternal but trying to view them in their own terms. She describes a party of Kalmuks early on in the journey:

> They all commenced quarreling about a few ribbons and pieces of silk I had given to our men. They had tied strips of red around their necks; but I satisfied all parties, as I thought, by giving some to the new comers; it did appear very ridiculous to see these great strong men taking delight in things which would only have given pleasure to a child at home. And yet I do not know whether we ought to look upon their doing this with contempt; how many men in a civilised country take pride in adorning their persons with the view of looking fine, and these simple creatures were only doing the same, only in a ruder manner! Still the quarreling continued, and then it turned out that the fellows were drunk. We had much difficulty in getting rid of them, and not until near midnight did they take their departure.
> These poor men are hardly dealt with, having to pay tribute to two emperors, the Chinese as well as the Russian. They are extremely good-natured. Whenever they saw me attempting to climb the rocks in search of flowers or fruit, they would ascend most difficult places to procure them for me. (p68)

Much later in the trip, when the worst of it was over and they came to rest after months of travelling, latterly in bad weather, she writes a passage which can be linked to several other remarks that begin to conclude her account:

> Notwithstanding this little drawback, I have enjoyed my trip amazingly; and have returned, I hope, wiser and better, having learned how little is necessary to render us happy. (p256)

> ... I could almost wish I were a Kirghis, wandering forth like them, under a serene sky, in search of mountain pastures. Happy people! Free and unfettered by any customs of so called civilised life. In those beloved mountains, how many a wild idea has crossed my brain, how many a spot have we fixed upon to be our final resting-place in this world of care! It was usually under the shade of a tree, where the mountain rill could be heard which fancy led me to believe would sooth the spirit to rest. (p330)
>
> ... Whereas now I am in a warm room, and surrounded by every comfort. I should probably shock you did I say which I prefer. (p335)
>
> ... I now look back on all those scenes, and repeat what we have often and often said, that willingly would we face ten times more toil and difficulty rather than go down to mother earth without having beheld them. (p351)

And one of his final flourishes:

> With this view I shall take my leave of the Alatou and Mustou Mountains, among which I wandered for one hundred and twenty three days; visiting scenery of the most striking character, which contributed one hundred and nine sketches to my folio. In these regions I encountered many dangers; providence, however, preserved me. Once a Kirghiz sent a ball from my own rifle, which struck the rocks three inches above my head ... I often experienced hunger, and when I departed from the neighbourhood it was almost without clothing and without a serviceable pair of boots. Notwithstanding which, as I rode away I looked back with regret upon the purple summits and snowy peaks, remembering only the happy days I had spent among their wonderful scenery. (496)

Biographical sources suggest that the Atkinsons returned to England in 1854. But did they? Final confirmation that they did not comes as I am about to complete this draft. It is still worth, I think, detailing hints, probable sightings and my earlier suppositions.

According to Lucy's Chronology, they reached St Petersburg on 24 December 1853 which would fit such a return. But more than one of Alatau's 1906 obituaries claims that he reached England when he was 10-years-old which, as he was born in 1848, would have been 1858. Is that an obituary mistake, or did the family remain in Russia and, if so, how easy was that, given that the Crimean War – Russia against Britain and France – was in progress?

When Nicholas I sent troops into the Danubian Principalities in July 1853, Britain and France moved fleets into the Baltic; in November, the destruction of the Ottoman Sultan's fleet by Russia provided Britain and France with a casus belli and they moved fleets into the Black Sea. When in March 1854 Russia ignored the Anglo-French ultimatum to withdraw from the Danube Principalities, Britain and France formally declared war.

There is at least one source, written by a young woman in similar circumstances to Lucy when she was governess to the Muravyevs, to suggest that it would have been very hard for an English family to live comfortably in Russia during the war. Rebecca McCoy (1818-1863) arrived in Russia in 1843; her account of her time there – The Englishwoman in Russia: Impressions of the Society and Manners – was published by Lucy Atkinson's publishers, John Murray, in 1855. Of the antipathy displayed, she writes at some length, including:

> … the Russians are not really enlightened enough to separate the individual from the nation, and think it a proof of patriotism to show their resentment to any son or daughter of England whom they chance to meet. As soon as the Declaration of War was known, there was a marked and very disagreeable change in the manners of even my oldest and most attached friends.

So unpleasant was this experience that, as Rebecca explained, 'It became almost impossible for any one to remain in the country who was obliged to come into daily contact with them.' Given the date of publication of her book, she probably left some time in 1854.

Not every source agrees with Rebecca; another suggests that 'Despite the animosity between England and Russia in the Crimea, the Emperor Nicholas took the English in St Petersburg under his protection…' And Anthony Cross, who was not only responsible for the re-issuing of Lucy's book in 1972, and unmasking Charlotte Bourne, but also outing Rebecca McCoy as the anonymous author of hers, writes in an email to me (24 August 2012):

> Obviously Britons continued to live, work, trade and write in Russia throughout the Crimean War, both commending the treatment they got (see the wonderful hospitality accorded to captured British officers) and heightening the Russophobia, depending on audience etc.

How, therefore, would the Atkinsons have been affected if they had stayed? And what are the hints that they did, apart from Alatau's obituary. Their relationship, particularly that of Lucy, with the extended Muravyev family is crucial. She had been governess in St Petersburg to the family of Mikhail Nikolaievich Muravyev-Vilensky for eight years before her marriage to which they gave their blessing. Her wedding in Moscow was witnessed by the 'Capnists, who did everything to render my short stay agreeable.' Two of those Kapnists who signed the marriage register were Lise (Elizaveta b 1828) Kapnist and Basile (Vasilii b 1830). Their mother, Elena Ivanova Kapnist, was born Muravyeva-Apostol. And here Lucy's visits to the Decembrist exiles in Siberia play their part.

Mikhail Nikolaievich Muravyev–Vilensky had briefly been arrested in 1825, but was soon released. It was not the same for his cousins of the Apostol branch of the family. One of the brothers committed suicide at the time of the Uprising, another was executed as a leader, and two others were exiled to Siberia. And it is very early on in the journey from Moscow that Lucy visited the exiled brother still alive – Matvey Ivanovich Muravyev-Apostol (1793-1886). He had had a rough time, as she recounts, but by the time she tracked him down in Jaloutroffsky, his living conditions had improved among a colony of exiles and, as she writes,

> I told him I had come from Petersburg, and gave him my maiden name; I was instantly received with open arms; he then hurried us into his sitting-room, giving me scarcely time to introduce my husband. … I was the bearer of many a message, as well as little gifts for all. (pp23-4)

Later in their Siberian travels, as well as visiting other exiles, the Atkinsons were entertained during a stay of some length in Irkutsk by another cousin, the Governor Nikolai Nikolaievich Muravyev-Amursky, which Thomas 'cordially' acknowledges in the preface of his first volume. Many were the tales to tell on their return, and strong were the ties that must have bound them to the grateful and fascinated extended Muravyev family.

And it is that family name that provides one of the hints that they stayed on in Russia. A brother of Mikhail Nikolaevich Muravyev-Vilensky was Nikolai Nikolaievich Muravyev-Karsky who gained that additional name when in November 1855 the city of Kars surrendered to him. In a letter of 1862 to her publishers, Lucy writes of him as the 'Hero of Kars.' But for an Englishwoman who had lived in England in November 1855, the 'Hero of Kars' – named as such in sources – would have been William Fenwick Williams, the Englishman in charge of the Ottoman forces in Kars during the siege which had started in June that year, and who was forced to surrender to the Russian general, Muravyev.

That Alatau was baptised in St Petersburg in February 1854, only suggests that the Atkinsons did not leave Russia immediately after their arrival there. But it is telling that one of Alatau's sponsors was Sofia Mikhailovna Muravyeva to whom Lucy had been governess**.** Sofia was by then 21.

Yet another sponsor was John Lumley Savile (later Lord Savile) attaché at the British Embassy 1849-54. What he and Thomas had in common was landscape painting. They must have become friends, though, through a common interest in Siberia. John Savile wrote to his brother Henry on 18 May 1853, undoubtedly before knowing Thomas, and probably not even knowing about him – and to follow his train of thought one needs to know that another of his preoccupations was the search for Sir John Franklin who had gone missing trying to discover the North West Passage:

> … even if I found nothing [concerning Franklin] I should have explored a curious unexplored part of the world and in coming back I shd take my time in visiting portions of Siberia also little known which would enable me to write a book, full of sketches of course, that might turn out a very profitable affair besides being a circumstance that wd give me a name and greatly improve my prospects of getting the secretaryship here.

The link with the British Embassy may well have been significant for Thomas, either as far as imparting information was concerned, or finance, or both.

Another hint for a longer stay comes from Thomas's obituary in *The Builder*; it mentions his abandonment of architecture for the 'pursuits of a traveller and artist' and adds 'He was furnished with every facility by the Russian Government; *even*

during the time of the war [my italics]; and thus was able to produce the two interesting works …'

That is where our research reached at a certain stage; but determination and perseverance are everything. Marianne Simpson then discovered online an article in the Hawaiian Star of 9 December 1911 about Andrew Dickson White, United States educator and diplomat who, in his youth, spent six months as an attaché at the Embassy in St Petersburg. His *Autobiography* says that he arrived there on the last day of October 1854, and he was certainly there for the funeral of Nicholas I on 2 March 1855. The Hawaiian article mentions that he knew the Atkinsons in St Petersburg, and that he was particularly taken with little Alatau; his Autobiography confirms that he was 'intimately acquainted with Atkinson, the British Traveler in Siberia', suggesting that he knew them well, presumably over time; and a footnote in his Autobiography tells of a later letter from Alatau.

Thus we have the Atkinsons in St Petersburg until at least 1855; the search continues for a later date. Now two other questions arise: Why did they stay? And how did they earn enough to live on? Arising from that is the question, how did Thomas finance the first, shorter part of his travels, and then the five years he and Lucy travelled together?

There are two possible answers to the why they stayed in Russia, one practical, one legal. Thomas had a lot of canvases which undoubtedly required more work on them, best done before they began their journey back to England while the memory was fresh; the same would have applied to the notes for his books and, according to *The Builder* obituary, he was implicitly furnished with every facility by the Russian Government following his return from his travels.

In the meantime, while it may not have been appropriate for Lucy, as a mother and wife, to work as a governess, she could, particularly with her contacts, have taught at any of the young ladies' Imperial institutes such as the Smolny, the Catherine, the Patriot or the Elizabeth. But as polite society in Russia spoke French, Lucy by this time would have been qualified to teach that language, as well as English. Or, with her experience of bringing up Alatau in the wilds of Siberia, might she not have become interested in the teaching of younger children?

The question of contacts and the help they could have provided leads into possible answers as to who financed the years of travel. The Muravyevs may well have been involved, particularly following discussions about plans for the Atkinsons to visit exiled family members in Siberia. Remember, too, that Lucy took over the running of their finances during their travels; she would naturally have felt particularly responsible. But it is also useful to turn to the acknowledgements in Thomas's first preface.

Although Mikhail Muravyev-Vilensky was vice president of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (founded in 1845), between 1850 and 1857, neither he nor the Society are mentioned there; indeed, Thomas only mentions the Society in passing, to do with a geographical point, in the second book – a mysterious

omission, unless one comes across this observation in the Gale Encyclopedia of Russian History:

Almost immediately after its founding, the [Society] became a polestar for the opponents of Nicholas I. It became one of the ideological centers of the struggle against serfdom and had direct links to Russian utopian socialists … its titular leader was the tsar's second son, Grand Duke Constantine, who represented the most 'progressive' (ie nationalistic) ideas of the time.

Perhaps Thomas did not wish to offend, for the book is dedicated to Emperor Alexander II who succeeded his father in March 1855, and it is fair to suggest that Thomas received favours from him as well as Nicholas I.

Thomas starts by acknowledging the 'passport' with which Nicholas provided him at the beginning of his travels. I have already mentioned his thanks to Andrew Buchanan and the Chargé's correspondence with the Foreign Office which confirms that the British also hoped to benefit from the information gleaned from Thomas's travels. And here it is also worth remembering that upon his death Lucy 'applied to the treasury for some money owed to her husband.'

After acknowledging the assistance of the late emperor, Thomas continues, 'I have also to thank her imperial highness, the Grand Duchess Helen for many acts of kindness and condescension. Nor have I forgotten my obligations to the Baroness Rahden and Miss Euler, a worthy descendant of the mathematician.' Miss Euler was probably the great granddaughter of Leonhard Euler, most of whose children and grandchildren made their careers in Russia. I can find no evidence of how she might have helped. It is easier to surmise the help of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (1807-1873), wife of Nicholas I's youngest brother Michael from the age of 17, and that of Edita Feodorovna Rahden, her maid of honour from 1853, who Lucy might have known.

Elena Pavlovna, born Charlotte of Wurtemburg was, by all accounts, something of a paragon: beautiful, highly intelligent and well-educated, and noted for her widespread philanthropy, she also presided over one of the most liberal salons in St Petersburg and was much involved in the pressure on her nephew, Alexander II, in his liberation of the serfs. And she practised what she preached on her own estates.

Among all the praise for her are three points pertinent to the Atkinsons. She was not only interested in the Decembrists – writing two unofficial histories of the uprising – but, according to a biography of Boris Chicherin, and an entry in her diary of 1849, she was sympathetic towards their aspirations: she believed in liberty. The Atkinsons' proposed visit to Decembrist exiles in Siberia may well have prompted her to contribute financially to the expedition. The statesman Paul Kiselev, in a diary entry for 6 June 1862, wrote, 'I know that she pays many private pensions to writers, artists and others.'

Another of Elena Pavlovna's concerns was to promote the capabilities of women so that they could take their place in public life. This led primarily to her setting up, at the beginning of the Crimean War, a unit of nurses (Sisters of Mercy of the Society

of the Exaltation of the Cross) which was later to become the Russian Red Cross, after her death administered by Edita Rahden. Edita was later also involved in the administration of women's educational institutions.

Lucy's travel account shows that she was interested in women's concerns but perhaps of more immediate relevance is a quotation written by the niece of Baroness Bertha von Marenholtz-Buelow, the recognized interpreter of Froebel's theories about the education of small children:

The introduction of the Froebel Method into Russia had meantime also begun. In the year 1865 the first foundation was laid by the kind hearted Grand Duchess Helene, who, at my aunt's request had sent three young Russian girls to Berlin to be trained. The Grand Duchess Helene, a princess memorable for her intellectual gifts and who did such an immense amount for the cause of education in Russia, graciously bestowed her friendship on my aunt.

As for where the Atkinsons could have lived, a possibility in St Petersburg was the English boarding-house kept by Mrs Wilson, described by Elizabeth Rigby in *Letters from the Shores of the Baltic* (1842) as 'in the Rue des Galères, English Quay …' (p41). Many English travellers to Russia stayed there. Mrs Wilson's daughter, Florence, worked as a governess and, like Rebecca McCoy, left in the summer of 1854 because of the war, but I have found no evidence that her mother did; indeed, internet traffic suggests that the family had been there more than a generation, and stayed on, including intermarriage, until at least the Russian Revolution. Be that as it may! Nick Fielding has discovered that the Atkinsons lived on Basil's Island, close to the English Quay.

The legal aspect of the Atkinsons' continuing stay is less easy to determine. It is clear that Thomas committed bigamy when he married Lucy in Moscow in 1848. His wife of nearly 30 years, Rebecca, was still alive, yet he states on the marriage certificate that he was a widower, which he was not, even if she had left him for another man, or one of them had deserted the other. However much Thomas was out of touch with Rebecca, he could hardly have thought she was dead, if only because of their children. Their elder son had died in Germany in 1846, at about the time Thomas left for Russia. But they also had two daughters. He had been a witness to the marriage in Lancashire in 1840 of his daughter Martha to a solicitor. By 1846, her son, Godfrey, was three. Can he really have had no interest in a grandson who would have been 15 in 1858, and three granddaughters born during his absence? In 1861, the year of Thomas's death, the Census shows that Martha and her family lived in Kensington, not far from Hawk Cottage. Then there was his daughter Emma, born in about 1831. Even if his first family had become estranged from him when he was imprisoned for debt in 1841, it is hard to believe that he had no contact with them, or knowledge about them.

Thomas carefully does not mention Lucy in his books, but he was not slow to write to at least one Russian correspondent about the birth of Alatau. In a letter of 19 November 1848 to Prince Gortchikoff in family archives he wrote, 'I must not forget to tell you that on the 4th last Mrs Atkinson presented me with a Son, the first and perhaps the only Englishman, that will ever be born in Kopal.' Gortchikoff's help, too, is acknowledged in Thomas's preface.

But if Thomas felt constrained for legal reasons from returning to England with his 'wife' in 1854, why would that have been any different in 1858? On Rebecca's reappearance following Thomas's death, Francis Galton, to whom we owe many details of this, writes, 'It was a wonder, and it is so still, how he dared to settle in London and risk a serious criminal charge.' Could he simply have felt more confident of his status in Society, less vulnerable to disclosure?
Galton adds to the Russian connections which could have been built up by an extended stay in Russia after 1854 when he writes that at Hawk Cottage Lucy and Thomas 'were visited by members of the highest Russian nobility.'

None of the hints I have detailed that the Atkinsons delayed their return to England by some years is conclusive, and yet there is a gap in the record of their activities. Although there was an exhibition of Thomas's paintings in London in 1856, he did not necessarily have to be in London then. His first book was published in 1858; did he write it in Russia? It is in that year, too that he became a fellow of the Geographical Society, and addressed them in February 1859. Would they not have known of his travels earlier, and approached him, if he had arrived back earlier?

The subject of Thomas's bigamy and the Atkinsons delayed return to England as a family has always nagged at me. So when I attended a Selden Society legal history lecture on bigamy by Rebecca Probert of Warwick University, I jumped at the chance to ask for her help. After reading what I had written about the Atkinsons, she replied as follows:

Bigamists would often claim to be widows or widowers – this of course provided a socially acceptable explanation for any children they might have had and meant that any chance references to their husband or wife – whether by themselves or another – could also be easily explained away. If they moved in different circles the chances of them having mutual friends who might report the bigamy would have been slim. Of course, even a genuine belief that one's first spouse was dead did not necessarily absolve one of bigamy, at least not before R v Tolson in 1889.

The fact that the marriage took place overseas would also have been no defence: the 1828 statute which governed bigamy at this time stipulated that a felony would be committed whether the second marriage was celebrated in England or elsewhere.

However, an absence of 7 years was a defence to a charge of bigamy, as long as the absent spouse was not known to be living during that time. So the crucial date may be when Thomas parted from Rebecca.

While there was no legislative change that might explain why Thomas felt able to return in 1858 as opposed to 1854, he might, however, have become aware that the penalties for bigamy were becoming less severe. The last year in which anyone was transported for bigamy was 1853. In 1854 it might not have been obvious that transportation as a punishment for bigamy had effectively fizzled out, but by 1858 it may well have been.

As to Lucy's knowledge or otherwise of Thomas's marital status, it was not uncommon for second wives to be ignorant of their husband's first marriages. Given that the fact that the second spouse knew of the first marriage was a factor that might reduce the sentence awarded, one would expect it to be pleaded wherever possible, but the proportion of cases in which it was mentioned almost never exceeds 10% in any decade.

Whenever the family returned to England, and it is likely to have been 1858, though we now know that Thomas returned several times before then, with the publication of *Oriental and Western Siberia*, he became famous, not only in London but also in his native Cawthorne where he was invited by the Spencer Stanhopes to Cannon Hall, and to speak in the village. But he died soon after publication of his second book, leaving a reputation that was later to tarnish.

An example of this is contained in a review in the Athenaeum of 9 September 1899 of an account by 'Vladimir' of his own travels in Russia's Far East. As the anonymous reviewer wrote, among other books 'Vladimir' studied in preparation was Thomas's Travels in the Regions of the Amur, and he added:

Surely 'Vladimir' ought to have been aware that Atkinson never travelled on the Amur, and that his book is in the main a plagiarism of Maack's work, published at St Petersburg in 1859.

Plagiarism was not the only question raised about Thomas's work, as Anthony Cross discusses in his introduction to the 1971 reprint of Lucy's book, but it is worth noting that Richard Karlovich Maack's account was published in Russian in 1859, only a year before Thomas's. Plagiarism would have had to be pretty nippy, and probably only Lucy of the couple would have been able to read the Russian sufficiently well, though Thomas may have applied himself during his years there.

In the year of his lingering death, there was no sign of how he was to be regarded in the future. Lucy wrote to the Reverend Charles Spencer Stanhope on 6 May 1861 from Lower Walmer, Kent, where they had gone for the sake of Thomas's health:

… knowing the interest you have always taken in Mr Atkinson, I think you will be pleased to hear [?] that he has received another splendid ring from his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Russia. It is a large emerald set in diamonds. Being so unexpected it is exceedingly gratifying as it is a mark of his Imperial approbation of the volume on the Amoor.

She seems to have started her own book before Thomas's death in August. She was nursing him devotedly when she wrote to Stanhope and in that same May letter explained,

As you so kindly enquire after my literary labours you may necessarily suppose that under these circumstances that an entire stop has been put to my plan. I sometimes doubt whether I shall ever have the courage to take them up again.

Following the discovery of Thomas's betrayal of her and the consequences, it is clear that Lucy was left very short of money. She published her book in 1863; from it's publication, she appears to have earned 43pounds and 10 shillings that year, and 15 pounds 2 shillings and 6pence in 1865, not enough to last her indefinitely. But through her publishers, an application was made to the Literary Fund. With that application – which included her marriage certificate - Lucy wrote pathetically:

I am left … totally unprovided for, he having expended the whole of his means, during his researches in Siberia. … For fourteen months before his death my husband was quite incapable of undertaking any kind of occupation owing to illness, brought on from over-working himself and taxing his strength beyond its endurance.

I am now reduced to the necessity of disposing of any wardrobe and a few valuables I possessed for our maintenance. And moreover I may add that even before my husband's death we had commenced doing so – always hoping he might recover and be able to resume his labours.

There followed supporting letters from Sir Roderick Murchison, Francis Galton, Lord de Grey and Rippon, and John Murray. Lucy had occasion to write to the Committee on 17 March 1862:

The sum of £80 will enable me I trust to carry out my project of giving to the world an account of my wanderings in those distant regions of Chinese Tartary where not only no European, but not even a Siberian lady ever set her foot before.

Another fund, for their son Alatau's education, was set up by the Geographical Society. Francis Galton was one of two trustees. Contributors included Sir Rodrick Murchison (President of the Geographical Society) who was also the driving force, Lady Colchester, John Crawfurd (President of the Ethnological Society), Earl Ducie FRGS, Earl of Ellesmere FRS FRGS, William Fairburn FRS FRGS (President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science) JW Frazer, John Murray FRGS, Henry Reed, Danby Seymour MP FRGS, E Osborne Smith, William Spottiswoode FRGS, Henry Vaughan, and Charles White. They gave sums ranging from £5-20. This fund enabled Lucy to send Alatau to Rugby. He later taught at Durham School, Roderick Murchison's old alma mater.

I said in my earlier published chapter that Lucy wrote nothing of Thomas's betrayal, and what she went through as a result. But Sally Hayles later discovered the existence of a letter from Lucy of 26 May 1862, written from 9 Lilly Terrace Hammersmith, to the second Lord Ashburton, President of the Geographical Society (in between two of Murchison's presidencies), in the family papers in the National Library of Scotland. I sent off for it and transcribed it. It made painful and telling reading for all those to whom I forwarded it, and is worth quoting in full here:

My Lord,

I have hesitated answering your letter of the 21st, for to say truth I hardly know what reply to make. The pictures which are at Bath House I claim as mine in two ways – first as the Widow of the late TW Atkinson and secondly as a gift to me some years since.

I am well aware and have also made acquainted those who had interested themselves in me, that the son-in-law of my husband had made statement to the effect, that there is another wife besides myself living, and further, he has taken out Letters of Administration. All my Solicitor demands is proof that there is such a person existing in the absence of which I am his legal wife and act as such. We are doing our utmost to bring this unfortunate affair to an issue, my friends, the gentlemen to whom we are indebted, are now going to sue Mr Wheeler, they are doing this not so much for their own benefit as to obtain justice for me.

Therefore if your Lordship had the slightest hesitation about delivery of the Pictures, pray retain them till the affair is settled, indeed I should prefer it.

I may moreover add that though my husband has been dead more than nine months, not one farthing belonging to him has gone for my maintenance and but for the kindness of Mr Monkton Milnes, Sir R. Murchison, Earl de Grey and Ripon, Mr Galton, Mr Murray and Mr Spottiswoode, I should have been at this moment without a place to shelter me or the wherewithal to nourish me.

When I desired to dispose of the Pictures it was not clandestinely but with the full knowledge of all my friends and creditors. When I say creditors I mean the gentlemen to whom we are indebted, and not the trades people, and it was particularly the claims of these latter I was desirous of satisfying.

All my husband's property I have delivered over to the principal creditor, but as I fear there will not arise sufficient funds to liquidate the debts, I am endeavouring with my feeble efforts to make the wherewithal to do so, and if I am successful it will be the proudest day of my existence.

Should this man be able to prove (which I doubt) that the first wife is living still I look upon myself as the one entitled to pay my husband's debts and clear his memory. In the sight of God I am his wife and I have to the best of my ability acted the part of one to him. I never deserted him for an instant either in sickness as in poverty, and I have followed him through dangers which many a man would have shuddered to encounter, and he has ever been to me a good husband during a period of fourteen years that I have been married to him.

I am sorry to trouble your Lordship on matters of not the slightest importance to you, but I have been obliged to say so much on my own behalf as Mr Wheeler has written to all the principal persons at the Geographical, and though not in direct terms still has worded his communications in many instances as to lead them to conclude I had been living in an improper way with Mr Atkinson, having done so, it is just possible he may have written to your Lordship.

The way Mr Wheeler has attacked my character is the more despicable and cowardly as I told him when he (my husband) had married me. The manly way would have been to attack the culprit if such there was, and not the poor victim.

I am my Lord

Lucy Atkinson
May 26th 1862

There is no sign of either the letter to which Lucy was replying, nor any further reply from Ashburton. Bath house in Piccadilly, the location of the paintings, is no longer the family home. I have written to the present Lord Ashburton who, in consultation with his brother, replied that he could give me no information about the paintings. The four held today by the Royal Geographical Society came to it via a nephew of Roderick Murchison. Are two of them those previously held by Ashburton? Or did Lucy get them back and sell them? Perhaps to Murchison?

A hint of possibilities comes from a letter to Douglas Carruthers, early twentieth century explorer and naturalist, best known for his travels in and writing about Mongolia. In his earlier life, he was secretary to a number of people active at the Royal Geographical Society, and from 1916 to 1921, including the date of the letter, he was honorary secretary of the Society. The letter was written from a hotel on Lake Como on 7 March 1925 and signed John – perhaps John H Miller with whom he travelled in outer Mongolia in 1910. Part of it reads:

Yesterday I went to tea with my friend Roderick Murchison [nephew of Sir Roderick] who has a lovely villa and glorious garden next door but one to this hotel.

At tea (in a dark room or I should have spotted them before) someone called attention to some pictures on the walls of rocky scenery and my host said 'Oh those were done I believe from sketches by Sir Roderick (a great geologist who you know [traversed] the Urals and further for the Emperor Nicholas I in 1847 – I said 'Well, there was a man Atkinson - - ' 'Oh', said Murchison 'those are by a man Atkinson'.

Imagine my surprise and enthusiasm! Fancy coming here and finding some of Atkinson's pictures! Well, M was delighted with what I was able to tell him and after tea got out a small square book, inter[lin]ed out with pictures and other things, full of sketches by Sir Roderick, small and very amateurish, larger ones and letters by an unknown hand (?Atkinson?) lithographs from these latter perhaps published in one or other of Sir R's books and a lot of holograph letters to Sir R from the Grand Duchess Marie (afterwards D of Edinburgh) Dolgorukys, Brunnow, Count Cauchrine, Megandorffs etc etc. Now, the next thing is to compare the illustrations in A's books with those and I am writing to [Humphrey] Wright to send out my copies of A. and Mrs A.

Perhaps not much will come of it all, but anyhow to find Atkinson working for Murchison is something and may lead to more. You will notice the date 1847 which if I remember rightly is the very first year of Atkinson's journeys?

I really think we shall make a fine article out of A. and present him to the world

very black on one side but full of colour if not quite white on the other!

Grand Duchess Marie was the daughter of Tsar Alexander II (as well as the Duchess of Edinburgh), the Dolgorukys were probably the Russian family which Charlotte Bourne mentions in connection with meeting Thomas in 1847; Brunnow could be either Philipp, long time Russian ambassador to London, or the astrologer, Franz; Megandorff is, I suspect, the Middendorf also mentioned by Charlotte Bourne – realising that John _____ was remembering after his visit names which he had heard but not seen written - and Cauchrine is totally elusive, probably for the same reason. Clearly the connection of the letter writers is with Thomas Atkinson, as well as with Sir Roderick Murchison.
And that last sentence summing up Thomas's character, as perceived by posterity, is not-to-be-missed.

There is no doubt that Thomas possessed the sort of attributes that would allow him to get away with anything he chose. They are summed up in an obituary in *The Annual Register: A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1861* (1862):

To these he added … a manner so gentlemanly and winning, that none whom he encountered in his travels or at home could suspect the roughness of the original material. … he was courageous, hardy, observant, and with manners which were at once commanding and winning.

It has been assumed, and in an earlier edition of my text I have suggested, that Lucy was unable to claim money owing to Thomas because he already had a widow, and Rebecca Atkinson did not die until 1872. Marianne Simpson has, however, provided me with this detail of pensions charged upon the Civil List and granted between 20 June 1862 and 20 June 1863:

Mrs Lucy Atkinson. In consideration of her husband's contributions to geographical science, the fruit of six years' explorations in Eastern Siberia and Mongolia, during which she accompanied him, and aided him in preserving a record of his researches; and of his having expended all his means in these efforts, leaving his widow totally unprovided for. 100 pounds.

This may have been the money owed to Thomas that Lucy had earlier tried to get from the treasury, and was perhaps payment for geo-political information provided. Was it granted after friends made representations to the Government? As Lucy points out in her letter to Ashburton, she had previously had to draw on those connections for financial support. The granting of the pension does imply, at least, that somehow Lucy was able to prove that she was Thomas's lawful wife, in spite of the record of his marriage to Rebecca in 1819. However, Rebecca Probert's opinion is as follows:

As to whether the payment of a pension indicated that Lucy was able to prove that she was Thomas' lawful wife – this is a tricky one. Bigamous wives would

not usually have any entitlement to support – but looking at the factors set out as justifying the award, it could almost be read as being in recognition of Lucy's own exertions, rather than a derivative claim through a husband. Just a thought!

However much Lucy suffered financially and emotionally, she did not lose her verve nor, indeed, her status as an intrepid traveller in her own right. On 26 March *1863*, she attended a dinner party and sat next to the magistrate Sir William Hardman who, in the memoirs entitled by his editor SM Ellis *A Mid-Victorian Pepys* (1923), describes her as 'a bright-eyed, intelligent woman, small in stature.' He summarises her Siberian adventures, particularly the premature birth of Alatau under inhospitable conditions, and continues with a delicious anecdote concerning a well-known poet and novelist:

She polished Meredith off at dinner in glorious style. He was in high spirits, and talking fast and loud. The Surrey hills, the Hindhead, the Devil's Punchbowl were the subjects of conversation, and George Meredith asserted (I know not on what authority) that the view from the Hindhead was very like *Africa*. Mrs Atkinson pricked up her ears, and bending forward across the table asked in a clear but low voice, 'And pray, Sir, may I ask what part of Africa you have visited?' Alas! Poor Robin! He has never been further south than Venice. No one could be more amused at his own discomfiture than he was himself, and he gave a very vivid description of his sensations when he saw Mrs Atkinson preparing the inevitable inquiry. As he had talked about Africa without having been there, the great Siberian traveller was disposed evidently to hold him lightly; for, later in the dinner, the talk was of certain cannibals who are to be imported as the last sensation exhibition, and the question of feeding them was mooted. 'Oh!' says Meredith, 'there will be no difficulty about that, we shall feed them on the disagreeable people, and those we don't like.' I was amused at the notion, and turning to Mrs Atkinson … I said, 'I wonder how many persons would survive if every one disposed in that fashion of those he did not like!' 'Yes, indeed,' said the mother of Alatan [sic] Tamchiboulac, 'there would be very few, if any, and that gentleman (meaning Meredith) would be one of the first to go!'

Francis Galton's last word on Lucy is that she returned to Russia. Of course she had contacts there, but that was hardly reason enough. A clue to what took her back lies in one of Alatau's 1906 obituaries. It says that he visited Russia in 1867 as secretary to the Turko-Russia Boundary Commission. Did Lucy, then aged 50, accompany him for old times sake, and even to provide him with connections and to interpret for him? Murchison, too, was much involved in Russia, visiting it three times as a geologist, in 1839, 1840 and 1844, before the 1845 publication of his finds. Was he behind Alatau's visit there, and did he even speak up for Thomas twenty years earlier, together with an introduction to Humboldt in Berlin? Murchison returned to St Petersburg to present the Tsar with a copy of his book and receive honours from him in late 1845, and Thomas arrived there in March 1846. Murchison and his geologist wife, Charlotte, were childless and he is known to have taken intellectual 'sons' under his wing.

Marianne Simpson has another, or additional, theory about Lucy's return to Russia, partly based on the fact that it has proved impossible to trace Lucy in the 1871 census. If not in England, did she stay longer in Russia on that second occasion,

perhaps once again becoming a governess? Her earlier charge, Sofia Mikhailovna Muravyeva had, in 1856, become the second wife of Sergei Sergeevich Sheremetv. Three of their subsequent children died before they were six but Pelageia, born in 1865, lived until 1875. Did Lucy stay in Russia to look after her? Another contact there would have been Alatau's 1854 baptismal sponsor John Lumley Savile who had returned to St Petersburg as Secretary to the British Embassy in 1860 (as he had hoped) and was, in 1866, made a member of the Russian Imperial Academy. Edward Cayley, another of Alatau's sponsors, would also have been around. Born in St Petersburg in 1805, he was a member of a merchant family in Russia from 1774. Cayley died there in 1871.

In the years following Lucy's later visit to Russia, she may even have travelled elsewhere. During his time as a junior master at Durham School, 1868-9, Alatau married Annie Humble and, in 1869, with infant Zoe, they travelled to Hawaii. It seems that Lucy, having gone to Northumbria in 1868, had persuaded Annie's mother to put Alatau's name before the Bishop for a teaching post in Honolulu. Alatau, with Annie and, eventually, seven children made his life in Hawaii as a highly-regarded teacher, journalist, poet, educationalist and politician. His eldest son 'Jack', a lawyer, not only went into politics but, as Immigration Secretary, travelled to Russia to bring back much-needed Russian labourers for Hawaii's sugar plantations (an unsuccessful venture).

Lucy's eldest brother Matthew had emigrated to Australia in about 1834 and become a school teacher and, later, a pastoralist. Their mother, widowed in 1847, followed in his footsteps in 1850 with her three youngest children; eventually, seven of Lucy's siblings were to make their home in Australia. Unfortunately, neither the descendants of the emigration to Australia, nor those of Alatau in Hawaii, have any evidence that Lucy visited her family in either place, and she may well not have been able to afford it, though in the year ended 20 June 1870, she received another Civil List pension of £50 in her own right and, interestingly, in the name of Mrs Lucy Sherrard Finley (her maiden name) 'in consideration of her services to literature'. The theory that Lucy was in Russia in 1871 could still hold because 1870 was simply the date on which the pension was granted. However cut off she was from her son, I know from a descendant of Alatau's daughter Edith, Belinda Brown, that Lucy sent a fabric length to each of her granddaughters in Hawaii for their first ball.

In 1855-6, Lucy's brother Matthew returned on a visit with his Australian wife and two of their children. As they also travelled on the Continent, it is possible that they met Lucy, though there are no details of such a reunion. Similarly, there are no records of any contact Lucy may subsequently have had with two other siblings who had remained in England. They are on the 1871 census.

According to family history, Lucy was 'housekeeper' to the family of Serjeant-at-Law Benjamin Coulson Robinson at 43 Mecklenburgh Square, Bloomsbury, London. When that started is not known but the 1881 census confirms that she lived there, together with Robinson's wife, Hannah, and his aunt Maria Coulson; it calls Lucy a cousin. The Robinsons' father, Thomas, had been a master mariner, like Lucy's ancestors. Benjamin Coulson Robinson and his father were baptised at St Dunstans, Stepney, where Lucy's parents were married. Robinson's mother was

Martha Morgan Coulson and a Benjamin Coulson and Lucy's brother Matthew were recorded as pastoralists together in Australia in 1838. It seems possible, therefore, that a 'poor relation' was taken in, as would have been commonplace then. In addition, Robinson had given a substantial contribution to Alatau's 1860s school fund.

Robinson died in 1890. In the 1891 census, Lucy is listed with the family of another relative, Thomas Weatherall Sampson, in Stepney. Sampson, a shipbroker, was married to Robinson's sister, Sarah.

Lucy died of bronchitis, aged 76, on 13 November 1893 at 45 Mecklenburgh Square. That much is certain, recorded on her death certificate; more speculative is the suggestion that the owner of that house was Edward J Conder, coffee roaster and dealer for the East India Company, who died two days later. Conder's mother was an Elizabeth Robinson. That is a common enough surname, but is it possible that Lucy was staying in the house next-door-but-one with another relative and that, in a final irony, she and Conder (aged 45) died in the Russian influenza pandemic that swept Western Europe from 1889-94?

It is unlikely, though, that at that stage she was anyone's poor relation. Her estate at probate was £3,071 5s 9d. At today's valuation that would equate to a minimum of £278,600. Where did the money come from when she had been so broke? Could she have inherited it from Benjamin Coulson Robinson? Unlikely. When he died in 1890, he left £2,801, but his wife did not die until 1896, two years after Lucy (leaving £2,924). From somewhere, Lucy accumulated a substantial amount of money.
There is another clue, and it comes from another member of the extended family. Thomas Weatherall Sampson died the same year as Lucy and Condor, in January, leaving the very large estate of £50,759 17s 6d (a minimum of £4,534,000 at today's rate), much of his fortune no doubt arising from railway shareholdings, as well as shipbroking at a time of economic expansion through transport. It would not have been surprising if he had left the odd £3,000 to Lucy. Did he, too, die of Russian 'flu? Is it too fanciful, indeed, to suggest that it was initially spread through the mariner community?

Lucy may have died in Bloomsbury, but she is buried in her family's home place of Stepney – in Tower Hamlets Cemetery; Alatau paid £10 for her tombstone with its difficult to decipher, slightly inaccurate inscription. Her father, too, is buried there, and Benjamin Coulson Robinson's grave is nearby.

Complicated though these details are, I include them in this revised version of my original chapter in *Travels in Tandem* for two reasons: first, they reveal the simple fact that Lucy's extended family ties and other connections remained strong and supportive, whatever the unhappiness and financial difficulties revelations about Thomas Atkinson's marriage ties may have brought her. Secondly, new readers may have information to add to that which continues to be unearthed. What, for example, is the Sherrard connection in Lucy's second name? A hint comes from a branch of her descendants living in Devon in 1910; General Sherrard was a neighbour and said to be a relative. Another theory relates to a Joseph and Lucy

Sherrard living in the East End. One of the Finleys' sons was called Joseph Sherrard.

As for the rings given to Thomas by the Tsar, my earlier text suggested that the emerald, at least, remains in the family. What I have since learned is that, while the little fruit-knife which Lucy may well have used in Siberia is still with that descendant, and I have had the pleasure of holding it, the ruby ring went missing on the descendant's wedding day.

Lucy and Thomas Atkinson continue to be of interest, not only because of their extraordinary travels through Eastern Russia and the writing that resulted, but also because of the intricate nature of their marital and family relations, their high-powered connections, and their financial affairs, all of which reveal something of the times and places in which they lived. And there are too many questions still to be answered to let the matter rest.

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