

Argûns of Ladak are most suitable, being immeasurably superior to the natives of Turkestan. The latter, being unused to the conditions of life at great altitudes, are, in general, easily exhausted. Excellent as Argûns are for this service under very trying conditions, nearly all of them are utterly devoid of courage of the combative sort. In the midst of difficulties arising from the nature of the ground they do their work most admirably, undergoing hardship and exposure without a murmur, but when trouble is caused by human enemies they are simply helpless. Ninety-nine out of a hundred Argûns if attacked will neither fight nor make the slightest show of resistance.

Doubtless many inhabitants of the country near the frontier are intimately acquainted with the principal routes from their neighbourhood into Tibet, but so great is the dread of the Pombos, or headmen of Tibet, who with their assistants threaten vengeance against all who guide strangers into the Chang, and even against the relations of such guides, that every one denies all knowledge of the country.

A journey without guides through an unknown country represented on the map merely by a blank space, becomes more difficult and trying when the region is without inhabitants. There the traveller is at the mercy of accidents. Provisions may fail, water may be unattainable, animals may die or be lost, disease may invade the caravan, and any one of these calamities might be fatal to the expedition. On the other hand, if inhabitants were encountered at an early stage of our journey into Tibet, our advance would certainly be stopped. A route had therefore to be chosen where none would be found. The general object of my first expedition was to explore and survey, as accurately as time and circumstances would permit, an extent of country on either side of a route which was to be distant from the routes of other