

CHAPTER IX

KERIYA AND NIYA

KERIYA, the Pein of Marco Polo and Pimo of Hwen Tsiang,¹ is a pleasant district, with a population of about fifteen thousand souls. I was much disappointed on reaching there to find that my men had not been able to buy any camels or make any other preparations. The natives were full of promises and pleasant words, but that was all. The camel-owners, so it appeared, had formed an "agreement in restraint of trade," and would offer nothing but the poorest animals at the highest prices. I sent for the chief Beg and asked his assistance, which he promised most readily, but the next day nothing had been done. I sent for him again.

"Did you promise to see that some camels were brought here to-day, and that the merchants who promised goods to us brought them at once?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "but every one was busy this morning."

"Did you make those same promises to my men two weeks ago, ten days ago, five days ago, and three days ago?"

"Yes, but there was much to do. We are busy. Do not be angry. I will do all that you wish to-morrow."

"Very well; do you promise to do it all to-morrow?"

"Yes, I promise."

"All right. A man who does not keep his promises is a

¹ See Appendix.