

**VERSES WRITTEN  
IN INDIA. [1889]**

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Verses Written in India. [1889] by Sir Alfred Lyall

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INDIA.

BY  
SIR ALFRED LYALL.



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MDCCCLXXXIX

I.

THE OLD PINDAREE.

*On the Nerbada, 1866.*

ALLAH is great, my children, and kind to a  
slave like me ;

The great man's tent is gone from under the  
peepul tree ;

With his horde of hungry retainers, and oil-  
fed sons of the quill ;

I paid them the bribes they wanted, and  
Satan may settle my bill.

It's not that I care for the money, or expect  
a dog to be clean,

If I were lord of the ryots, they'd starve ere  
I grew lean ;

THE OLD PINDAREE.

But I'd sooner be robbed by a tall man who  
showed me a yard of steel,  
Than be fleeced by a sneaking Baboo, with  
a belted knave at his heel.

There goes my lord the Feringhee, who talks  
so civil and bland,  
Till he raves like a soul in Jebannum if I  
don't quite understand ;  
He begins by calling me Sáhib, and ends by  
calling me Fool ;  
He has taken my old sword from me, and  
tells me to set up a school ;

Set up a school in the village ! "And my  
wishes are," says he,  
"That you make the boys learn reg'lar, or  
you'll get a lesson from me ;"  
Well, Ramlal the oilman spites me, and  
pounded my cow last rains ;

He's got three greasy young urchins ; I'll see  
that *they* take pains.

Then comes a Settlement Hákim, to teach  
us to plough and to weed,  
(I sowed the cotton he gave me, but first I  
boiled the seed)

He likes us humble farmers, and speaks so  
gracious and wise  
As he asks of our manners and customs ; I  
tell him a parcel of lies.

" Look," says the school Feringhee, " what a  
silly old man you be,  
" You can't read, write, nor cypher, and your  
grandsons do all three ;  
" They'll total the shopman's figures, and  
reckon the tenant's corn,  
" And read good books about London and  
the world before you were born."



Well, I may be old and foolish, for I've  
seventy years well told,  
And the Franks have ruled me forty, so my  
heart and my hand's got cold ;  
Good boys they are, my grandsons, I know,  
but they'll never be men,  
Such as I was at twenty-five when the sword  
was king of the pen ;

When I rode a Dekhani charger, with the  
saddle-cloth gold-laced,  
And a Persian sword, and a twelve foot  
spear, and a pistol at my waist ;  
My son ! He keeps a pony, and I grin to see  
him astride,  
Jogging away to the market, and swaying  
from side to side.

My father was an Afghán, and came from  
Kandahar :

He rode with Nawáb Amir Khan in the old  
Maratha war :

From the Dekhan to the Himalay, five  
hundred of one clan,

They asked no leave of prince or chief as  
they swept thro' Hindusthan ;

My mother was a Brahminee, but she clave  
to my father well ;

She was saved from the sack of Juleysur,  
when a thousand Hindus fell ;

Her kinsmen died in the sally ; so she fol-  
lowed where he went,

And lived like a bold Patháni in the shade of  
a rider's tent.

It's many a year gone by now ; and yet I  
often dream

Of a long dark march to the Jumna, of  
splashing across the stream,

Of the waning moon on the water, and the  
spears in the dim star-light,  
As I rode in front of my mother, and  
wondered at all the sight.

Then, the streak of the pearly dawn—the  
flash of a sentinel's gun,  
The gallop and glint of horsemen who  
wheeled in the level sun,  
The shots in the clear still morning, the white  
smoke's eddying wreath,  
Is this the same land that I live in, the dull  
dank air that I breathe?

But the British chased Amir Khan, and the  
roving times must cease,  
My father got this village, and he sowed his  
crops in peace;  
And I, so young and hot of blood, I had no  
land or wife,