How Gilbert Died
A.B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson, Australia, 1895

There’s never a stone at the sleeper’s head,
There’s never a fence beside,
And the wandering stock on the grave may tread
Unnoticed and undenied,
But the smallest child on the Watershed
Can tell you how Gilbert died.

Their rifles stood at the stretcher head,
Their bridles lay to hand,
They wakened the old man out of his bed,
When they heard the sharp command:
“In the name of the Queen lay down your arms,
Now, Dunn and Gilbert, stand!”

Then Gilbert reached for his rifle true
That close at his hand he kept,
He pointed it straight at the voice and drew,
But never a flash ouletapt,
For the water ran from the rifle breech—
It was drenched while the outlaws slept.

Then he dropped the piece with a bitter oath,
And he turned to his comrade Dunn:
“We are sold,” he said, “we are dead men both,
But there may be a chance for one;
I’ll stop and I’ll fight with the pistol here,
You take to your heels and run.”

So Dunn crept out on his hands and knees
In the dim, half-dawning light,
And he made his way to a patch of trees,
And vanished among the night,
And the trackers hunted his tracks all day,
But they never could trace his flight.

But Gilbert walked from the open door
In a confident style and rash;
He heard at his side the rifles roar,
And he heard the bullets crash.
But he laughed as he lifted his pistol-hand,
And he fired at the rifle flash.

Then out of the shadows the troopers aimed
At his voice and the pistol sound,
With the rifle flashes the darkness flamed,
He staggered and spun around,
And they riddled his body with rifle balls
As it lay on the blood-soaked ground.

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