

Hanford L. Gordon, [A soldier's poem].

Camp Stone, Maryland, November 12, 1861.

Poem, 4 pages.

Lines on the death of my friend Louis Mitchell of Co. I 1st Reg^t Minnesota Vols: who was killed in a skirmish on the Virginia side of the Potomac Oct: 21st 1861. The events and circumstances are literally true.

We've had a fight a Captain said
Much rebel blood we've spilled
We've put the saucy foe to flight
Our loss – but a private killed!
“Ah, yes!” said a sergeant on the spot
As he drew a long deep breath
Poor fellow, he was badly shot
Then bayoneted to death!”

When again was hushed the martial din
And back the foe had fled
They brought the private's body in
I went to see the dead.
For I could not think the rebel foe
(’Tho under curse and ban)
To vaunting of their chivalry
Could kill a wounded man.

A minie ball had broke his thigh
A frightful crushing wound
And then with savage bayonets
They had pinned him to the ground
One stab was through his abdomen
Another through his head
The last was through his pulseless breast
Done after he was dead.

His hair was matted with his gore
His hands were clenched with might
As though he still his musket bore
So firmly in the fight
He had grasped the foeman's bayonet
His bosom to defend!
They raised the coat cape from his face
My God! it was my friend!

Think what a shudder thrilled my heart
'Twas but the day before
We laughed together merrily
As we talked of days of yore
"How happy we shall be," he said
When the war is o'er and when

The rebels all subdued or dead

We all go home again!

Ah little he dreamed, that soldier brave

(So near his journey's goal)

That God had sent a messenger

To claim his Christian soul!

But he fell like a hero fighting

And hearts with grief are filled

And honor is his, though our Chief shall say

“Only a private killed!”

I knew him well, he was my friend

He loved our Land and Laws

And he fell a blessed martyr

To the country's holy cause.

Soldiers our time will come most like

When our blood will thus be spilled

And then of us our Chief shall say

“Only a private killed.”

But we fight our country's battles

And our hopes are not forlorn

Our death shall be a blessing

To "Millions yet unborn";
To our children and their children
And as each grave is filled
We will but ask our Chief to say
"Only a private killed."

H. L. Gordon

1st Regt Minn. Vols.

Camp Stone Md: Nov: 12th 1861