

Meanwhile the excitement among the rest of our comrades was intense. Their first idea was an attack by the Prussians, and every one alighted. The soldiers were lastly loading their muskets, while the officers, sword in hand, endeavoured to rally them, and shouted "Forward." But the sad reality was soon apparent to them. They met two or three of the wounded, thrown on the road by the violence of the shock, dragging themselves slowly and laboriously along the declivity. There was no light: voices called to each other in the gloom; the night was so dark that I could scarcely distinguish the forms of those who so cautiously advanced by the light of the wrecked locomotive. Recognizing friends at last, I called. They hastened eagerly forward, removed the mass which was weighing me down, and in less than a minute I was extricated. They wanted me to stand up; but alas! that was too much for my disjointed limbs, and I fell back with a groan. Raising me gently, four of them carried me into a meadow bordering on the track. There, lying on the grass, I found about thirty men dead or dying. The one I was placed beside was no other than my friend Paul V. . . . With the aid of a lantern I could see that his right foot was terribly shattered, and was uncovered by either shoe or gaiter. I had as yet not lost consciousness a single instant, and was perfectly aware of all that had occurred; but from time to time the great pain I suffered wrung a cry from me. Paul V. suffered without complaint. Here and there we heard our names called by those who sought us, but had not strength to reply.

Immediately after the accident the clerks had come out of the station-house in order to see what had happened. By-and-bye a train arrived with workmen, torches and tools. At the same time the country people began to awake. The two church bells of the little village tolled dolefully, carrying afar the bad tidings. Believing it was a Prussian attack, the peasants armed them-

selves with pitchforks and muskets, and prepared to make a vigorous resistance. When undeceived, they set to work at once to relieve the sufferers. Thanks to this reinforcement the labour went on rapidly. The bodies were laid out in a line in the meadow. The scene was a strange and truly mournful one—more than a hundred bodies were lying in the plain; we had all been covered with the short blue cloak of the *Chasseurs*. The lips of some of those near me were black, their teeth clenched, their eyes wild and staring, and their heads turned convulsively, telling of terrible sufferings. In their agony they dug their nails into the frozen ground. A shadowy group, with torches in their hands, flit from one to another; these were our officers, seeking to recognize their men; they stooped to look at the faces, the rosin trickling down their fingers. The night was starless, and the mist of early morning, falling on the plain, encircled the flame of the torches with a halo which, from a distance, gave it a bloody hue. With the officers came a medical student, a pupil of the Parisian hospitals, then residing at Critot. He also stooped and gazed; occasionally he spoke a few words, and then the body was carried away and placed near the declivity where the other dead had been piled. Behind the group came a priest. When they approached me, one of the officers, a lieutenant, recognized me and shook hands; the young student who had just left Paul V. . . . looked for a few moments at my features, distorted by suffering, said "Well, well!" and then passed on. In front of me was a poor fellow whom I had heard complain a little while before, but now he no longer moved. Two several times the student held a glass to his lips. "He is dead," said he at last, and the new corpse was taken away.

Here my recollection stops; the trial had been too great, and I fainted. I only regained consciousness when I was hoisted, with other unfortunates, into one of the two-wheeled carts used by our peasantry. In