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A WEEK afterward Ox Eye came to the kitchen. She told me to get ready to go the same day. In the hollow of her hand she held two gold pieces, which she put side by side on the corner of the oven, and, touching one after the other with her finger, she said, "Our Mother Superior sends you forty francs." I did not want to go away without saying good-bye to Colette and to Ismérie, whom I had often seen at the other side of the lawn; but Mélanie assured me that they didn't care for me any more. Colette could not understand why I was not married yet, and Ismérie could not forgive me for being so fond of Sister Marie-Aimée.

Mélanie went to the gate with me. As we passed the old bench, I saw that one of its legs was broken, and that one end of it had fallen into the grass. At the gate I found a woman waiting. Her eyes were hard. She said authoritatively, "I am your sister." I didn't recognize her. It was twelve years since I had seen her. Directly we got outside she caught hold of my arm, and in a voice