Contents

EARLY SPRING
MY RECOLLECTIONS OF KNULP
THE END
Once, early in the nineties, our friend Knulp had to go to the hospital for several weeks. It was mid-February when he was discharged and the weather was abominable. After only a few days on the road, he felt feverish again and was obliged to think about getting a roof over his head. He had always had plenty of friends, he would have met with a friendly reception in almost every town in the region. But he was strangely proud about such things and any friend from whom he accepted help could take it as an honor.

This time he remembered Emil Rothfuss, the tanner in Lorchstetten, and at nightfall, amid rain and west wind, he knocked at the tanner's door. Rothfuss opened the shutters a crack and shouted down into the dark street: "Who's there? Can't it wait until daylight?"

Tired as he was, Knulp perked up at the sound of his friend's voice. He remembered a little song he had made up years before when he and Rothfuss had been traveling companions for a month, and started to sing it:

A man walked into the hotel
After the day was done.
I know those tired features well,
It must be the Prodigal Son.

The tanner opened the shutters wide and leaned far out of the window.
"Knulp! Is it you, or is it your ghost?"
"It's me!" cried Knulp. "But you can come down the stairs, you don't have to jump out the window."
Happily the tanner ran down and opened the little front door. Knulp had to blink when his friend held the smoking oil lamp up to his face.

"And now, get inside!" Rothfuss cried out excitedly, drawing his friend into the house. "You can tell me all about it later. There's some supper left. And there's a bed for you too. Good God, what weather to be out in! Have you got decent shoes at least?"

Disregarding his questions and astonishment, Knulp stopped on the stairs to unfold his turned-up trouser cuffs, then climbed through the half light with assurance, though he had not set foot in the house for four years.

In the hallway outside the door to the big room, he hesitated. The tanner bade him go in, but Knulp took him by the hand and held him back.

"Hold on," he whispered. "It seems you're married now."

"That's right."

"Well, you see. Your wife doesn't know me. Maybe she won't be glad to see me. I wouldn't want to be in the way."

"Ho-ho! In the way!" Rothfuss laughed, opened the door wide, and pushed Knulp into the brightly lit room. Over the dining table a large oil lamp hung on three chains. A light cloud of tobacco smoke hovered in mid-air; thin wisps of smoke floated over to the hot lamp-chimney, where they whirled up swiftly and vanished. On the table lay a newspaper and a pouch full of tobacco. The tanner's young wife jumped up from the little sofa on the far side of the room with embarrassed, not quite genuine alacrity, as if she had been awakened from a nap and didn't want to show it. For a moment Knulp blinked at her as though dazed by the glare, then looked into her light-gray eyes and held out his hand with a polite compliment.

"Well," said the tanner. "Here she is. And this is Knulp, my friend Knulp that I've told you about. Naturally he'll stay with us, we'll give him the journeyman's bed. Luckily it's empty. But first we'll have a drink of cider together, and Knulp must have something to eat. Wasn't there some liver sausage left?"
The tanner's wife rushed out of the room and Knulp looked after her.

"She's kind of frightened," he said in an undertone. But Rothfuss wouldn't agree.

"No children yet?" Knulp asked.

At that point she came back, bringing the sausage on a pewter plate. She set it down beside the breadboard, on which she had placed half a loaf of bread with the cut side down. A carved inscription ran round the circular breadboard: Give us this day our daily bread.

"Lis, do you know what Knulp just asked me?"
"Forget it," said Knulp. And with a smile he turned to the lady of the house: "By your leave, ma'am."

But Rothfuss wouldn't forget it.

"If we had no children. That's what he asked me."

"Goodness!" she laughed, and left the room again.

"You haven't got any?" Knulp asked when she was gone.

"No, not yet. She's taking her time. It's better that way for the first few years. But dig in, and I hope you like it."

The tanner's wife brought in the gray and blue earthenware cider pitcher, set down three glasses, and filled them. Her movements were deft. Knulp watched her and smiled.

"Your health, old friend!" cried the tanner, holding out his glass. But Knulp was a gentleman. "Ladies first," he said. "Your health, ma'am. Prosit, old man!"

They clinked glasses and drank. Beaming with pleasure, Rothfuss winked at his wife and asked her if she had noticed what fine manners his friend had.

She had noticed from the start.

"Herr Knulp is more polite than you," she said. "He knows what's right and proper."

"Nonsense," said the guest. "We all do what we've learned. When it comes to manners, you could easily put me to shame. And how beautifully you set the table, like at the finest hotel!"

"Doesn't she!" said the tanner, and laughed. "But that too was learned."
"Really? Where? Was your father a hotelkeeper?"

"No, he's been dead for years. I hardly knew him. But I waited on table for several years at the Ox. Maybe you've heard of it?"

"The Ox? Why, that used to be the best inn in Lorchstetten."

"It still is. Isn't it, Emil? Nearly all our guests were traveling salesmen and tourists."

"I believe you, ma'am. I'm sure you had a pleasant life and made good money. But a home of your own is even better."

After neatly removing the skin and setting it aside on his plate, he slowly and with visible relish spread the soft sausage on his bread. From time to time he took a swallow of the good yellow cider. The tanner looked on with respectful appreciation, as Knulp's slender, delicate hands went through the necessary motions so neatly and easily, and the lady of the house also took pleasure in watching him.

"I must say you don't look so good," the tanner remarked critically, and Knulp had to admit that he had not been well of late and had been in the hospital. But he passed over the unpleasant parts of his story. His friend asked him what he meant to do next and warmly offered to keep him as long as he liked. That was exactly what Knulp had expected and counted on, but as though smitten with bashfulness, he merely thanked him offhandedly and postponed the discussion of such matters.

"We can talk about that tomorrow or the day after," he said negligently. "Thank goodness the world isn't coming to an end. Anyway, I'll stay here a little while."

He disliked making plans or promises too much ahead. He felt uncomfortable unless the morrow was his to dispose of as he pleased.

"If I should really stay here a while," he said after a time, "you'll have to put me down as your journeyman."

"That's rich!" said the tanner with a laugh. "You my journeyman! Anyway, you're not a tanner!"

"That doesn't matter. Don't you see? Tanning means nothing to me. It's said to be a fine trade, but I have no talent for work."
But it would look good in my roadbook. I'd be eligible for sick pay."

"Can I see your book?"

Knulp reached into the inside pocket of his almost new suit and took out his roadbook, neatly enfolded in an oilcloth case.

The tanner looked at it and laughed. "Spotless! It looks as if you'd left your mother only yesterday morning."

He studied the entries and official stamps and shook his head with profound admiration. "What splendid order! With you, everything has to be just right."

Keeping his roadbook in order was indeed one of Knulp's hobbies. In its dazzling perfection, his roadbook was a delightful fiction, a poem. Each of the officially accredited entries bore witness to a glorious station in an honest, laborious life. The only seemingly discordant feature was his restlessness, attested by frequent changes of residence. The life certified by this official passport was a product of Knulp's invention, and with infinite art he spun out the fragile thread of this pseudo-career. In reality, though he did little that was expressly prohibited, he carried on the illegal and disdained existence of a tramp. Of course, he would hardly have been so unmolested in his lovely fiction if the police had not been well disposed toward him. They respected the cheerful, entertaining young fellow for his superior intelligence and occasional earnestness, and as far as possible left him alone. He had seldom been arrested and never convicted of theft or mendicancy, and he had highly respected friends everywhere. Consequently, he was indulged by the authorities very much as a nice-looking cat is indulged in a household, and left free to carry on an untroubled, elegant, splendidly aristocratic and idle existence.

"But that's enough now," he said, taking back his papers. "You'd have been in bed long ago if I hadn't turned up." And, with a compliment to the lady of the house, he arose.

"Come along, Rothfuss, and show me my bed." The tanner lighted him up the narrow stairway to the journeyman's room on
the top floor. Against the wall stood an empty iron bedstead and a wooden bed that was made up.

"Would you like a hot-water bottle?" asked the tanner in a fatherly tone.

"Don't rub it in," said Knulp with a laugh. "Naturally a master tanner like you wouldn't need one, now that he has such a pretty little wife."

"Exactly," said Rothfuss with enthusiasm. "Here you are getting into a cold attic bed, and sometimes there's no bed at all and you have to sleep in the hay. When an honest craftsman like me has a house and business and a nice wife. If you'd only wanted to, you could have been a master craftsman long ago and be doing better than me."

Meanwhile Knulp had hurriedly undressed and crawled shivering between the cold sheets.

"Go on, go on," he said. "I'm comfortable and ready to listen."

"I meant it seriously, Knulp."

"So did I, Rothfuss. But you mustn't get the idea that marriage is your invention. Good night now."

Next day Knulp stayed in bed. He still felt rather weak, and in any case he would hardly have gone out of doors in such weather. In the morning when his friend dropped in, Knulp told him not to worry about him, just to bring him a dish of soup at lunchtime.

All day he lay quiet and content in the dim light of the attic room. The cold and weariness of the road seeped away from him and he basked in a feeling of sheltered warmth. He listened to the regular thudding of the rain against the roof and to the fitful gusts of the warm, soft wind. Now and then he dozed off for half an hour and occasionally, as long as it was light enough, he leafed through his traveling library -- a few sheets of paper on which he had copied poems and sayings, a bundle of newspaper clippings, and a few pictures that he had cut out of magazines. Among these
he had two favorites, which were creased and worn from frequent handling. One was the actress Eleonora Duse, the other a sailboat at sea in a high wind.

From boyhood Knulp had felt drawn to the sea and the north country; several times he had made a start in that direction, and once had gone as far as Brunswick. But time and time again a strange anxiety and homesickness had driven this migrant, who was always on the move and could never settle down anywhere, back to South Germany by forced marches. His carefreeness seemed to leave him when he found himself in a place with a strange dialect and customs, where no one knew him and where it was hard for him to keep his legendary roadbook in order.

At noon the tanner brought him soup and bread. He entered the room quietly and spoke in a frightened whisper; he thought Knulp must be sick, for he himself had never lain abed in broad daylight since the days of his measles and chicken pox. Knulp, who was feeling fine, didn't bother to explain, but merely said he would be well and up the next day.

Late in the afternoon there was a knock at the door. Knulp was dozing and made no answer. The tanner's wife tiptoed in, removed the empty soup dish, and put a bowl of coffee in its place on the stool beside the bed.

Knulp had heard her come in, but whether because he felt lazy or merely out of caprice, he kept his eyes closed and gave no sign of being awake. Standing there with the empty dish in her hand, the young woman cast a glance at the sleeper, whose head lay on his arm in its blue-checkered shirtsleeve. Struck by his fine dark hair and the almost childlike beauty of his carefree face, she stood a while, looking at the handsome young fellow about whom her husband had told her such strange stories. She saw the bushy eyebrows on his clear, delicately modeled forehead, his thin brown cheeks, his fine red mouth and slender neck, and she liked what she saw. She thought of the days when, as a waitress at the Ox, a springtime fancy would come over her and she would let a handsome young stranger like this one make love to her.
Thoughtful and slightly aroused, she leaned forward a little to see his whole face. The tin spoon slid off the plate and fell to the floor, and what with the stillness and embarrassing intimacy of the place, she was scared to death.

Knulp opened his eyes slowly and unsuspectingly, as though he had been sound asleep. He turned toward her, shaded his eyes with his hand for a moment, and said with a smile: "Why, it's Frau Rothfuss! And she's brought me coffee. A nice bowl of hot coffee, the very thing I was dreaming about. Thank you, Frau Rothfuss. By the way, what time is it?"

"Four," she said quickly. "Now drink it while it's hot. I'll come back later for the bowl."

And out she ran as though she hadn't a moment to spare. Knulp looked after her and listened as she hastily descended the stairs. His eyes were thoughtful and he shook his head several times, then he let out a soft birdlike whistle and turned to his coffee.

But an hour before dark he began to feel bored. His health was restored, he was wonderfully rested, and he wanted company. Contentedly he got out of bed and dressed, crept down the dark stairs as quietly as a cat, and slipped out of the house unnoticed. A damp wind was still blowing from the southwest, but the rain had stopped and there were clear spaces between the clouds.

Sniffing at the air, Knulp sauntered down the darkened street and across the deserted marketplace. Then he stood in the open doorway of a blacksmith's shop, watched the apprentices cleaning up, and, while warming his hands over the dying forge fire, struck up a conversation with the journeymen. He inquired about various acquaintances in the town, about deaths and marriages. The master took him for a fellow blacksmith, for Knulp knew the language of every trade and the signs by which its practitioners recognize one another.

Meanwhile Frau Rothfuss was making her evening soup, fiddling with the iron rings of the little stove, and peeling potatoes. When she had finished and the soup was safely simmering on a low fire, she took the kitchen lamp, went into the
big room, and stood before the mirror. In it she found what she
had been looking for: a full face with fresh cheeks and bluish-gray
eyes. Her hair didn't seem quite right, and with a touch or two of
her nimble fingers she put it in order. Then she gave her hands,
which she had washed only a moment before, another wipe on her
apron, picked up the lamp, and went quickly up to the attic.

She knocked at the door of the journeyman's room, first
softly, then a little louder. When there was no answer, she set the
lamp down on the floor and opened the door with both hands,
very cautiously for fear it would creak. Then she entered on her
tiptoes, took one step, and ran her hands over the stool by the
bedside.

"Are you asleep?" she asked in a soft voice. And then again:
"Are you asleep? I've come to clear away the coffee things."

When there was no sound, not so much as a breath, she
stretched out her hand toward the bed, but quickly withdrew it
with an eerie feeling, and went out for the lamp. Finding the room
empty, the bed carefully made, and even the pillows and
featherbed shaken out, she rushed back down to the kitchen in
confusion, torn between fright and disappointment.

Half an hour later, when the tanner had come in to supper
and she had already set the table, she began to worry. But she was
afraid to tell her husband about her visit to the attic room. Just
then the outer gate opened, soft steps passed over the paved
corridor and up the winding stairs, and there stood Knulp. He
took off his trim brown felt hat and wished them good evening.

"Great guns!" the tanner cried out in consternation. "Where
have you been? He's sick and off he goes, running around in the
night! You'll catch your death."

"Right you are," said Knulp. "I see I'm just on time, Frau
Rothfuss. I smelled your fine soup way over at the marketplace.
That will keep my death away from me."

They sat down to eat. The master of the house was feeling
talkative, he sang the praises of his home life and the advantages
of being a master craftsman. He teased his guest and then lectured
him in earnest; it was high time that he stopped gadding about
doing nothing. Knulp listened but said little in reply, and the tanner's wife didn't open her mouth. She was annoyed with her husband, who struck her as uncouth compared to the handsome and well-mannered Knulp, and she showed her good opinion of the guest by the attentiveness with which she waited on him. At the stroke of ten, Knulp said good night and asked the tanner to lend him his razor.

"Did you ever see anybody so clean!" Rothfuss exclaimed. "The second his chin starts to tickle, his beard has to come off. Well, good night. I hope you feel better!"

Before going to his room, Knulp leaned out of the little window at the head of the stairs to take a look at the weather and see what was going on in the neighborhood. The wind had died down and between the roofs there was a black patch of sky studded with clear, damply shimmering stars.

He was about to pull in his head and close the window when suddenly the little window across from him, in the house next door, lighted up. He saw a small, low room very much like his own; a young servant girl had come in, holding a brass candlestick in one hand and in the other a large water pitcher, which she set down on the floor. Then she held the candle over her narrow bed. Covered with a coarse red blanket, it was plain but neat, and invited sleep. She put the candlestick down, he could not see where, and seated herself on a low green-painted wooden box, the typical servant girl's trunk.

The moment this unexpected scene began to unfold, Knulp had blown out his own candle, so as to avoid being seen, and now he stood quietly peering out of his window.

The girl across the way was the kind that appealed to him. She may have been eighteen or nineteen, not very tall, with an attractive olive complexion, brown eyes, and thick brown hair. Her pleasant, quiet face did not look exactly happy; all in all, she seemed rather woebegone as she sat there on her hard green box, and Knulp, who knew the world and young girls as well, had a pretty fair idea that the poor thing hadn't left her native village very long ago with her box, and was homesick. Holding her thin,
dark-skinned hands in her lap, she sought brief comfort in sitting for a little while on her meager possessions and thinking of home.

As motionless in his window as she was in her room, Knulp peered with strange eagerness into this unknown human life, so innocently nursing its sweet sorrow in the candlelight without a thought that someone might be watching. He saw her kindly brown eyes, now unconcealed, now covered by long lashes, he saw the red light playing softly over her dark, childlike cheeks, and as he watched her slender young hands on the dark-blue cotton of her lap, he knew they were tired and resting awhile before getting down to undressing -- the day's last chore.

At last the girl raised her head with its heavy pinned-up braids, heaved a sigh, looked dreamily but no less sorrowfully out into the void, and then bent down to untie her shoelaces.

Knulp was reluctant to leave his post, but it struck him as wrong and almost cruel to watch the poor child undressing. He would have liked to call out to her and chat with her a while, to make some joke that would send her to bed a little happier. But he was afraid she would take fright and blow out her candle if he called to her.

Instead, he resorted to one of his many arts. He began to whistle. The sound was so faint that it seemed to come from the distance. He whistled the folk song "In a cool green valley, a mill wheel turns all day," and he managed to make his whistling so frail and delicate that the girl listened for some time without knowing quite what it was. It was only at the third stanza that she slowly stood up and went to the window.

She leaned out and listened, while Knulp went on whistling. For a few measures she wagged her head in time with the tune. Then suddenly she looked up and saw where it came from.

"Is there somebody over there?" she asked in a whisper.

"Only a tanner's apprentice," he answered just as softly. "I didn't mean to prevent you from sleeping. I was a little homesick, so I thought I'd whistle a tune. But I also know some cheerful ones. -- Are you a stranger here too?"

"I'm from the Black Forest."
"Ah, from the Black Forest. So am I. How do you like it here in Lorchstetten? I don't like it at all."
"Oh, I don't know yet, I've only been here a week. But I don't really like it much. Have you been here long?"
"No, only three days. What village are you from?"
"You wouldn't know it."
"You never can tell. Or is it a secret?"
"Achthausen. It's only a hamlet."
"But a pretty one. The first thing you see is a chapel. Then there's a mill, a sawmill I think it is, and they've got a big yellow St. Bernard. Am I right or wrong?"
"My goodness, that's Bello!"
When she saw that he knew her village and had actually been there, the greater part of her suspicion left her; she perked up and asked eagerly: "Do you know Andres Flick?"
"No, I don't know anybody there. That's your father, isn't it?"
"Yes."
"Then you must be Frulein Flick, and when I find out your first name I'll be able to write you a postcard the next time I pass through Achthausen."
"Do you want to leave here so soon?"
"No, I don't want to. But I want to know your name, Frulein Flick."
"But I don't know yours either."
"I'm sorry about that, but it's easily mended. My name is Karl Eberhard. Now if we meet in the daytime you know what to call me, but what am I to call you?"
"Barbara."
"Thanks. That's fine. But it's a hard name to pronounce and I'm almost willing to bet they called you Bärbele at home."
"Yes, they did. But if you know everything, why do you ask so many questions? And now it's time to go to sleep. Good night, tanner."
"Good night, Fräulein Barbele. Sleep well, and just because it's you, I'll whistle another tune. Don't run away, there's no charge."

He started right in and whistled a flamboyant yodel-like tune full of trills and turns, which leapt and sparkled like dance music. Amazed at his skill, she listened to the end. When he had done, she slowly drew the shutters tight and fastened them, while Knulp found his way to his room in the dark.

Next morning Knulp got up early and made use of the tanner's razor. But the tanner had worn a full beard for years and the razor was so neglected that Knulp had to hone it on his suspenders for half an hour before it would cut. When he had finished, he put on his coat, picked up his shoes, and went down to the kitchen, where it was warm and already smelled of coffee.

He asked the tanner's wife for a brush and polish for his shoes.

"Go 'long!" she cried. "That's not the kind of work for a man. Let me do it."

But that he would not allow, and when finally with an awkward laugh she set down the brush and polish before him, he did the work thoroughly, neatly, and with playful ease, like a man who did manual labor only very occasionally, when in the mood, but then cheerfully and with great care.

"Beautiful!" said the tanner's wife admiringly, and looked at him. "As shiny as if you were going to see your sweetheart."

"Oh, I wish I were."

"I believe you. I'll bet you've got a pretty one." She laughed again insinuatingly. "Maybe more than one?"

"Oh, that wouldn't be nice," said Knulp reproachfully. "I can show you a picture of her."

She stepped eagerly closer as he drew his oilcloth portfolio from his pocket and took out the picture of Duse. She studied it with interest.

"She's high-class," she began cautiously. "Almost like a real lady. But kind of skinny. Is her health all right?"
"Oh yes, as far as I know. But now I'll go say hello to the old man. I can hear him in the big room."

He went into the room and bade the tanner good morning. The room had been swept and looked friendly and homelike with its light-colored paneling, its clock, its mirror, and the photographs on the wall. A cozy room like this, thought Knulp, isn't bad in the winter, but it's not really worth marrying for. The favor shown him by the tanner's wife gave him no pleasure at all.

When they had had their coffee he went out in back with Rothfuss, who showed him through the tannery. Knulp knew almost every trade and amazed his friend by his knowledgeable questions.

"How do you know all that?" he asked with animation. "Anyone would think you were a journeyman tanner, or at least that you'd been one."

"A traveling man learns all sorts of things," said Knulp modestly. "Come to think of it, I learned about tanning from you. Don't you remember? Six or seven years ago, when we were on the road together. I made you tell me all about it."

"And you still remember all that?"

"Some of it, Rothfuss. But I won't take up any more of your time. Too bad, I'd have liked to give you a hand, but it's so damp and stuffy down there, and I've still got this cough. Goodbye for now, old man, I'll take a little turn in town while the rain holds off."

And neatly brushed, his brown felt hat tilted back just a little, he sauntered off with a light, jaunty step, carefully skirting the puddles. Rothfuss stood in the doorway looking after him.

"Lucky man," the tanner reflected with a twinge of envy. And on his way to the tanning pits Rothfuss thought about his eccentric friend who wanted nothing of life but to look on, and the tanner could not have said whether this was asking too much or too little. A man who worked hard and got ahead was better off in many ways, but he could never have such delicate, graceful hands or walk with so light and jaunty a step. No, Knulp was right in doing what his nature demanded and what few others could do,
in speaking to strangers like a child and winning their hearts, in saying pleasant things to ladies of all ages, and making Sundays out of weekdays. You could only take him as he was, and when he needed a roof over his head, it was a pleasure and an honor to give him one; indeed, you almost wanted to thank him, for he brought lightness and gaiety into the house.

Meanwhile his guest, happy and alert with curiosity, strolled through the town, whistling a military march through his teeth, and, taking his time about it, sought out the places and people he knew from former days. First he climbed a steep hill to an outlying slum where he knew an unfortunate tailor, Schlotterbeck by name, who was forever mending old trousers and was seldom given a new suit to make. A great pity, for he was skilled at his trade, he had started out with high hopes and worked in good shops. But he had married young, he already had several children, and his wife had little talent for housekeeping.

Knulp found the tailor on the third floor of a house set back from the street. His little workshop hung like a bird's nest over the void, for the house was built on the hillside, and when you looked down from the windows, you not only had the three stories below you but further on a steep slope covered with pathetic slanting gardens and patches of grass and ending in a gray confusion of chicken coops, rabbit hutches, and woodsheds; the nearest roofs that could be seen lay far below, at the bottom of the valley. However, the workshop was light and airy, and as he sat cross-legged on his big table by the window the tailor could look out over the world like a lighthouse keeper.

"Morning, Schlotterbeck," said Knulp, stepping into the room. Blinded by the bright light, the tailor narrowed his eyes and peered in the direction of the door.

"Ah, Knulp!" he cried joyfully and held out his hand. "Back in town? And what's wrong, to bring you all the way up here?"

Knulp pulled up a three-legged stool and sat down. "Give me a needle and a bit of your very best brown wool, I want to check my equipment."
He removed his coat and vest, selected his yarn, threaded a needle, and with vigilant eyes inspected his whole suit, which still looked as good as new. Whenever he discovered a thin spot, a loose trimming, or a button that was not quite tight, he set it to rights with nimble fingers.

"And how are you otherwise?" Schlotterbeck asked. "The weather hasn't been so good. But then if a man has his health and no family...

Knulp cleared his throat argumentatively.

"Yes, of course," he said wearily. "The Lord sends down His rain on righteous and unrighteous alike, and only the tailors keep dry. But you're never satisfied, are you, Schlotterbeck?"

"Oh, Knulp. I'm not complaining. But listen to the children screaming in there. There are five of them now. Here I sit, working my fingers to the bone till late at night, and it's never enough. And all you do is gad about."

"Wrong, my friend. I was in the hospital for four or five weeks in Neustadt, and they don't keep a man a minute longer than he absolutely needs, and nobody'd stay any longer anyway. The ways of the Lord are strange, friend Schlotterbeck."

"Keep your pious sayings to yourself."

"Lost your religion, eh? I've just been trying to get religion and that's why I came to see you. I want you to tell me all about it."

"Don't bother me with religion! In the hospital, you say? I'm sorry to hear that."

"Never mind, it's over now. I want you to tell me about Ecclesiasticus and Revelation. You see, I had plenty of time in the hospital, and they had a Bible. I read nearly all of it, so now I can put in a word too. A curious book, the Bible."

"You've got something there. It's curious, all right. Half of it must be lies, because nothing fits together. Maybe you understand it better, because you went to Latin school."

"I don't remember much of that."