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13. *Legacies*

Christmas Past is Christmas Present, strolls Mesopotamia mobile in hand, buffering the orange bundle of a man beyond meaning. So at Kut we stick it out with the Poonas, waiting on the RFC's hand-dropped payload; tight in the hair's breadth between whizz-bang and telegram. The text-speak of a Field Service Postcard says enough: *we dnt cm in2 yr cts as konkrez or nmes but libr8rs*. Though, if needs be, we'll be back in black with a South London twang, in biplane or bomb-vest, to stroll into markets or drop in on uncivilized tribes. Repeat then, repeat: *Kill them all. God will know His own*. Each man blessed with just enough afterlife to teach him they were wrong.

20. *Vine*

Free of the 'Birdcage' in the lee of a hill, three gardeners of Salonika stand easy. Across the valley, he watches from an open tent; roots a vision that will propagate on walls for a time beyond the field gun's range. Nativities are now and the Tenth Irish Seraphim. Cookham reaches for paper and starts to work as they lay down kit to pick the first grapes they will taste fresh from the vine. Macedonia gifts a minute's joy. Then the good shepherd whistles in Golgotha for the instant that wreathes his terror in its six-second loop: Giotto, grapevine, blast and burnt-flesh, Giotto, grapevine, blast and burnt-flesh, Giotto, grapevine, blast, burnt-flesh...