

FROM BEYOND THE STYX

English Gardener Tells of Experience While Heart Stopped

During a serious operation, John Puckering's heart stopped beating, and he was "dead" four and a half minutes. In that brief interval, he said, his soul slipped away, and joined a heavenly company. It was as tho he were "looking into a great place, something like a hall."

"There was a good light," as the Associated Press carried the English gardener's account, "and I saw crowds of people. So many were there that they seemed like a multitude at a football match. The people stood in a circle, and I noticed that there were no children among them. They looked natural, with healthy faces, and they appeared to be dressed as on earth. I was deeply impressed by the happiness which shone in their faces, and which was so intense that I felt as tho I should not have minded joining them."

"Old Friend" Nodded

Among the happy company were some friends. One had died seven years before. This "old friend" nodded to the visitor. The happiness he saw "thrilled" the gardener, and he "lost all fear of death." The scene was "as realistic as my own back garden," he said after his "return."

While Mr. Puckering was sojourning on the other side of the Styx, Dr. G. Percival Mills slipped his hand under the diaphragm of the apparently lifeless body, massaged the heart, and injected adrenalin. Artificial respiration had been started, and Puckering's heart beat again.

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After convalescing, Puckering returned to work, carrying the memory with him. Tho he was apparently unaware of it, his account was published in the press on both sides of the Atlantic, and a controversy ensued. Sir Oliver Lodge, famous physicist and spiritualist, is reported to have dismissed the story gruffly.

Opinions Differ

Lady Doyle, widow of the creator of *Sherlock Holmes*, said the revelations "entirely corroborated" what she and her eldest son, Denis, and "millions of others have known for years." The fact that Puckering is "an unimaginative fellow who had taken no interest in spiritualism, and couldn't have known he was giving exactly the same description we have been given of first impressions after death," said Mr. Doyle, "leaves no doubt in my mind."

On the other hand, Dr. J. B. S. Haldane, famous British scientist, who had recently returned from the United States, was not impressed. There is nothing unusual in the stopping of a heart for five minutes, he said. He thought it probable that Mr. Puckering had a "revelation." "People," he said, "often do under an anesthetic."

Experiences similar to Mr. Puckering's have been reported before and with as much detail. Whether people who have been resuscitated ever actually were dead is for medical science to determine. People apparently drowned often have been revived.