

From: "Stuart Green" <stuartgreenmd@yahoo.com>  
To: "Benjamin Franklin" <dr\_benjamin\_franklin@yahoo.com>  
Subject: **Immers'd in a cask of Madeira wine**

Dear Doctor Franklin:

Please forgive my audacity for writing this Communication tho' you have been suppos'd dead more than two hundred years. I have faith you will read it and have many things to ponder thereby. I write in your own Style to ease Difficulty of Discernment, for much has chang'd in our Mutual Language, whilst many old Words are yet retain'd. Future Communications shall, to my ear, have a more Modern Tone.

My name is Stuart Green and I am a Physician much interest'd in your Life and Times. I happily reside in the United States of America, a Nation today "populous and powerful" as you had predict'd so many years ago.

Our Country recently celebrated the three hundredth Anniversary of your Birth, for you are as admir'd by Posterity as by your own Acquaintances. Indeed, your Fame has increas'd over time: you are now rever'd as a great Sage and Patriarch of our Country.

Your Progeny, descend'd from your daughter Sarah's children, are as numerous as the Cobblestones on Market Street. Metallic Rods, from your time 'til now, protect every manner of Building from Lightning strikes.

While studying the Facts of your illustrious Life I read a Newspaper report of your Demise written by Dr. John Jones who attend'd you in your presum'd final Hours. The Particulars of the Account were, it seemed to me, more compleat than necessary for Person of your Fame. I wonder'd why Doctor Jones, would write such a detailed Depiction, except to persuade the Public of its reality tho' untrue.

I puzzled on this matter 'til I chanc'd on this Letter you wrote to Jacque Barbeau-DuBourg:

I have seen an instance of common flies...drown'd in Madeira wine...Having heard it remark'd that drowned flies were capable of being reviv'd by the rays of the sun, I proposed making the experiment upon these; they were therefore expos'd to the sun...In less than three hours, two of them began by degrees to recover life...and soon after began to fly, finding themselves in Old England, without knowing how they came thither.

I wish it were possible...to invent a method of embalming drown'd persons, in such a manner that they may be recall'd to life at any period, however distant. For having a very ardent desire to see and observe the state of America a hundred years hence, I should prefer to any ordinary death, being immers'd in a cask of Madeira wine...to be later recall'd to life by the solar warmth of my dear country!"

Upon further conjecture, I reasoned the following: In March of 1790, a Month before your record'd Death, you and Dr. Jones conspir'd to repeat your Madeira'd fly experiment but with a living Person—yourself—instead of an Insect so encask'd. As you neared Death from a ruptured Lung Abscess and suffer'd exceedingly from your Gout and Bladder stones Doctor Jones, tho' perhaps reluctant, agreed with your final Scheme.

And thus before you breath'd your last, while in delirium from Opium, Doctor Jones (helped by your grandsons Benjamin and Temple) place you



in a large oaken Barrel. Rapidly filling the remaining space with sweet Madeira, Doctor Jones thereby preserv'd for Posterity the greatest Philosopher of his age.

At the end of the Deed, Doctor Jones pound'd home a thick oak Lid upon which was carved: "Open not this Cask 'til be Found for Stone and Gout a Cure. B Franklin, Printer."

But, as *Poor Richard* said: "When the Wine enters, out goes the Truth." And so Jones, needing a portly Corpse, stole from Pennsylvania Hospital the Body of a Man recently deceased and nameless to the Stewards there.

The unknown's Proxy's Funeral was grand indeed; 20,000

attended, it is said. The Pallbearers may have shoulder'd a foreign pauper treated in death like a Prince of State. He perchance lays today repos'd next to your dear Deborah in the Graveyard of Christ Church, Philadelphia.

In the meantime, Doctor Jones and your grandsons, sworn to secrecy, in dark of Night, I imagine, buried your Barrel in the Common Ground of your beloved town.

At present, there is much digging in Philadelphia's center, so I assume workers will soon enough strike their Shovels against a strange oak Cask. The words on the Lid will doubtless cause great Commotion thru the land. Your Descendants, upon consultation, will no doubt permit you revitaliz'd by electric Jolt.

Upon return to Life, you will quickly learn that we still employ Extracts of Opium for Pain relief and the Delirium caused thereby is just the same. Luckily tho' both Gout and Stones are now easily cur'd. I shall explain how soon enough.

I have reason'd that you will, upon regaining your Senses, be much bewilder'd by all you see. I, therefore, believing I have correctly surmised both your false Interment and your future Revival, undertake the difficult but worthy Task of informing you about interesting Things that have transpir'd since your *mort-faux*.

You will have much Time to read while you recover from Encaskment. To fill those Hours, I will prepare many Communications focusing attention on those Things of interest to you during your Lifetime.

I fear that by spending more than two hundred Years immersed in Madeira, your remarkable Brain has become besotted and your Memory diminished. I thought you might find benefit in being reminded of your numerous Accomplishments during your long and prodigious Life, to better discourse on these Matters when queried.

I will write of your Friends now esteem'd for great and lasting achievements. I shall report to you upon a favorite Subject of yours, the advancements in Science and in Medicine that in life command'd your attention. For example, consider this: The six week journey from Philadelphia to London is now accomplish'd in six hours; Small-Pox is

stricken from the List of afflictions; and Men have walk'd upon the Moon and returned safely from thence hither.

To explain how these things came to pass, I must remind you of your ideas about Electric Storms and Waterspouts, about the shape of Rocks and Toads in Stone and many more things. You will learn from me which of your many Conjectures are now consider'd correct and which few, wronghead'd.

To describe such Changes, I must provide you a new Vocabulary, for many Words have been lately added to our belov'd English. Clearly, you have much to absorb that will demand your patient Attention. The Language of these communications will evolve, as do the Ideas, so at the end of them both, I will write and you will read as a modern Person.

I choose to write not by Quill and Paper but by a prevailing manner called Electronic Mail, often named "email" by the many that employ it. I shall spend considerable time explaining this as it is mostly deriv'd from your electrical Experiments.

Do I err upon who lies beneath the Franklin churchyard Stone? I hope not. The good Doctor Jones himself succumb'd a year after your alleged demise. Bennie perish'd of The Fever seven years thereafter, and Temple, the last of my presum'd Conspirators to pass away, like the other two, never said a word that would support my curious thoughts. Tho' *Poor Richard* said, "Three can keep a secret if two of them are dead," I reply, "Three best keep a secret if all of them are dead!"

And so, Sir, as I wait your Cask's unearthing, I assume the rightness of my Notions and prepare for you this History of your Ideas, for that will be the Subject henceforth herein.

For my Effort, I pray to never hear Poor Richard's words, "Who has deceiv'd thee so oft as thyself?"

