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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

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-----*Remove fera monstra, tueque
Saxificos vultus, quæcunque ea, tolle Meduse.* Ov. Met.

IN a late paper I mentioned the project of an ingenious author for the erecting of several handicraft prizes to be contended for by our *British* artizans, and the influence they might have towards the improvement of our several manufactures. I have since that been very much surprized by the following advertisement which I find in the *Post-Boy* of the 11th instant, and again repeated in the *Post-Boy* of the 15th.

ON the 9th of October next will be run for upon Colehill-heath in Warwickshire, a plate of six guineas value, 3 heats, by any horse, mare, or gelding that hath not won above the value of 5 l. the winning horse to be sold for 10 l. to carry 10 stone weight, if 14 hands high; if above or under, to carry or be allowed weight for inches, and to be entered Friday the 15th at the Swan in Colehill, before 6 in the evening. Also a plate of less value to be run for by asses. The same day a gold ring to be grinned for by men.

The first of these diversions that is to be exhibited by the 10 l. race-horses, may probably have its use; but the two last, in which the asses and men are concerned, seem to me altogether extraordinary and unaccountable. Why they should keep running asses at *Colehill*, or how making mouths turns to account in *Warwickshire*, more than in any other parts of *England*, I cannot comprehend. I have looked over all the Olympic games, and do not find any thing in them like an ass-race, or a match at grinning. However it be, I am informed that several asses are now kept in body-cloaths, and sweated every morning upon the heath, and that all the country fellows within ten miles of the *Swan* grinn an hour or two in their glasses every morning, in order to qualify themselves for the 9th of *October*. The prize which is proposed to be grinned for, has raised such an ambition among the common people of out-grinning one another, that many very discerning persons are afraid it should spoil most of the faces in the county; and that a *Warwickshire* man will be known by his grinn, as Roman catholicks imagine a *Kentish* man is by his

tail. The gold ring which is made the prize of deformity, is just the reverse of the golden apple that was formerly made the prize of beauty, and should carry for its posie the old Motto inverted,

Detur tetrioni.

Or to accommodate it to the capacity of the combatants,

*The frightfullst Grinner,
Be the Winner.*

In the mean while I would advise a *Dutch* painter to be present at this great controversy of faces, in order to make a collection of the most remarkable Grinns that shall be there exhibited.

I must not here omit an account which I lately received of one of these grinning matches from a Gentleman, who upon reading the above-mentioned advertisement, entertained a Coffee-house with the following narrative. Upon the taking of *Namur*, amongst other publick rejoicings made on that occasion, there was a gold ring given by a Whig Justice of Peace to be grinned for. The first competitor that entred the Lists, was a black swarthy *French* man, who accidentally passed that way, and being a man naturally of a withered look, and hard features, promised himself good success. He was placed upon a table in the great point of view, and looking upon the company like *Milton's* death,

Grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile. —

His muscles were so drawn together on each side of his face, that he shewed twenty teeth at a Grinn, and put the country in some pain, lest a foreigner should carry away the honour of the day; but upon a further tryal they found he was master only of the merry Grinn.

The next that mounted the table was a Malecontent in those days, and a great master of the whole art of Grinning, but particularly excelled in the angry Grinn. He did his part so well, that he is said to have made half a dozen women miscarry; but the Justice being apprised by one who stood near him, that the fellow who grinned in his face was a *Jacobite*, and being unwilling that a disaffected person should win the gold ring, and be looked upon as the best Grinner in the country, he ordered the Oaths to be tendered unto him upon his quitting the table, which the Grinner refusing, he was set aside as an unqualified person. There were several other Grottesque figures that presented themselves, which it would be too tedious to describe. I must not however omit a Plough-man, who lived

lived in the further part of the county, and being very lucky in a pair of long lanthorn-jaws, wrung his face into such a hideous grimace, that every feature of it appeared under a different distortion. The whole company stood astonished at such a complicated Grinn, and were ready to assign the prize to him, had it not been proved by one of his Antagonists that he had practised with Verjuice for some days before, and had a Crab found upon him at the very time of Grinning; upon which the best judges of Grinning declared it as their opinion, that he was not to be looked upon as a fair Grinner, and therefore ordered him to be set aside as a cheat.

The prize, it seems, fell at length upon a Cobler, *Giles Gorgon* by name, who produced several new Grinns of his own invention, having been used to cut faces for many years together over his Last. At the very first Grinn he cast every humane feature out of his countenance, at the second he became the face of a Spout, at the third a Baboon, at the fourth the head of a Base-viol, and at the fifth a pair of Nut-crackers. The whole assembly wondered at his accomplishments, and bestowed the ring on him unanimously; but, what he esteemed more than all the rest, a country wench whom he had wooed in vain for above five years before, was so charmed with his Grinns, and the applauses which he received on all sides, that she married him the week following, and to this day wears the prize upon her finger, the Cobler having made use of it as his wedding-ring.

This paper might perhaps seem very impertinent, if it grew serious in the conclusion. I would nevertheless leave it to the consideration of those who are the patrons of this monstrous trial of skill, whether or no they are not guilty, in some measure, of an affront to their species, in treating after this manner the *Humane Face Divine*, and turning that part of us, which has so great an image impressed upon it, into the image of a Monkey; whether the raising such silly competitions among the Ignorant, proposing prizes for such useless accomplishments, filling the common peoples heads with such senseless ambitions, and inspiring them with such absurd ideas of superiority and preheminance, has not in it something immoral as well as ridiculous.

Saturday,