

FINAL WORD ↗ BY A. BARTON HINKLE

The Crown Must Regylate This Infernal Machine!

To the Most High and Mighty Monarch,
Henry Bolingbroke,
King of England and France,
Lord of Ireland,
Defender of the Faith, and
Sovereign of the Realm

May it please Your Majesty,

No words that my poor faculty might present herein may convey to Your Royal Highness the Peril that hath confronted Our Realm since Johannes Gutenberg first cyrs'd the World with his infernal engine. But its maleficent *causati* may be said to be more numerate than the Constellations of the Firmament and, if not quickly contained, threaten to undo all that Your Wisdom, guided by the Hand of Providence, hath so generously wrought.

Since ancient days, the craft of committing thought to Posterity hath remained the province of Scribes, who might be trusted to record only those utterings befitting men of noble thought and virtuous soul; or of Minstrels and Troubadours, who for the enjoyment of others relate tayles old and familiar, the which may be said to offer education most moral. In such manner hath Our Culture been sustayned, and through gradual embellishment o'er many generations improved.

In like way hath the proclamation of news remayn'd the sole province of Town Cryers, who may be entrust'd to announce tidings fit for the ears of merchants and peasants, and to withhold those tidings which might instill within them wrong ideas.

The virtue of these methods doth proclaim itself: Through paynes-taking and parsimony may only the most elevated of doctrines be preserved; the quill is not

wasted on dross. Yet the printing-press contaynes within its demonic celerity the capacity to discharge all manner of *ejectae*, and to do so agayne and agayne, with a velocity unmatch'd by even the swiftest hand, which may be liken'd unto a wounded animal that drags itself across the page as the falcon-press swoops down upon it.

Even the most narrowly compass'd fancy may therefore conceive whereal such malign artificiality may lead. Contemplate what manner of Falsehoods may have bestrew'd themselves concerning the Black Death, were Gutenberg's hellish contraption already in the World: that the Malady issued, not from miasma, nor from the righteous Judgement of God, but from some other source; and that, perforce, it should have been treated, not with blood-lettyng—amulets—charms—and prayer, penitence, and flagellation—but through a physick of variolation, by whyche the healthy are exposed to the issue from a buboe, as though their bodies might ward off the Pestilence themselves. Conceive how many more subjects of the Realm might have perish'd, had such false news been permitt'd to spread.

Meditate, Your Royal Highness, upon what fraudulent doctrines might infest Our Fair Kingdom, were those outside the domain of Your Privy Council and the Church to express whatever Deceptions, Mendacities, Perversions, and Treacheries Satan or the enemies of the Crown might leach into their ears—*exempli gratia*, that government derives its just powers not from Divine Right, but from the consent of the governed;

or that English translations of the Bible might be fashion'd, that commoners might comprehend it without priestly intercession.

Your Highness need not linger upon these possibilities at length to comprehend the menace present'd should this new and ungovernable “social” media propagate throughout the Realm: that trust in the Monarchy might be undermined by free-thinking; that the pliable mind of youth might succumb to the temptations of constant scrolling through page upon page, to the detriment of industry; that all manner of books, Impious and Licentious in Nature, might gain reception among the populace; and the worst of all, that Your Divine Authority might be question'd, and Our Most Excellent Form of Government destabiliz'd.

Better that Gutenberg had never liv'd, that his printing-press never conceiv'd. But Pandora hath open'd her box; the troubles hath been loos'd. The princelings of printing cannot be trusted to restrict the issue of their contraptions. To forestall the most extream calamities, I therefore beseech Your Highness that a Minister of Truth be appoint'd forthwith; that he be empower'd to regulate what manner of memorandae might be permitt'd to be publish'd; that the ownership of printing-presses be restrict'd, both in number and in the quality of persons accord'd this privilege; and above all, that the Minister be empower'd, yea verily oblig'd, to survey every printed document throughout the land, to judge it Fair and True or not, and perforce to forbid the publication of any sentiment found wanting in the eyes of Our Government. This only can safeguard the virtue of the people, the heavenly authority of Your Kingdom, and the longevity of Our Glorious Realm.

With fondest wishes,
I have the honor to remain, Your most loyal servant while I breathe,
A. Barton Hinkle

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