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# CLAREMONT

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK  
UP ON THE FARM

by Charles R. Kesler

MILLIONS OF VIEWERS AROUND THE WORLD KNOW JEREMY Clarkson as one of the hosts (“presenters,” they call them in the U.K.) of two amusing and amazing car shows, *Top Gear* (2002–2015) and *The Grand Tour* (2016–2024), the first produced with the BBC, the second with Amazon. I don’t watch car shows, even if they are funny and clever. I first saw Clarkson after he had become a farmer—at Diddly Squat Farm in the Cotswolds, as recorded on his show *Clarkson’s Farm*, currently the most humane and delightful unscripted hour on television.

The show, half comedy, half documentary, has appeared for four seasons on Amazon Prime and is Clarkson’s love letter to Britain’s farmers. The 65-year-old admires them for pursuing a laborious, unsung, unprofitable vocation threatened by local busybodies and national do-gooders alike. That’s why he calls himself a “libertarian.” As he told the *Telegraph* in a recent interview, “I believe in getting rid of all the legislation. There should only be one law in the country, which is ‘Don’t be a twit.’” The show tracks his long-running feud with the West Oxfordshire council, which prohibited him from setting up a restaurant on the farm, as well as his struggles against “Whitehall gobbledegook” when deciding which crops he could plant and “the government’s Pub Police” as he tried to buy one of the myriad closed pubs in the neighborhood and reopen it.

As usual with libertarians, there are deeper layers under the wish to be left alone. Clarkson admires not merely farmers’ sense of independence but also what they do, and long to do, with that freedom.

Of course there will be rotten apples, but the farmers I’ve met don’t want to bugger up the land, because they’re going to pass it on to their children—or they thought they were [before the Labour government changed the inheritance tax scheme]. So they look after the wildlife and hedges and soil and try to make the food as well as possible for the lowest price. You don’t need legislation to tell you not to do something stupid.

Although farmers aren’t in it for the money, Clarkson thinks their honorable way of life should not be rendered more difficult, isolating, and impoverishing than it has to be. Government should not be in the business of discouraging what we used to hail as “agrarian virtue.”

The show doesn’t stint on the birds ‘n’ the bees. You see cows and pigs being conceived and lengthy scenes of them being born; Clarkson names the runt of one sow’s litter “Richard Ham” after his di-

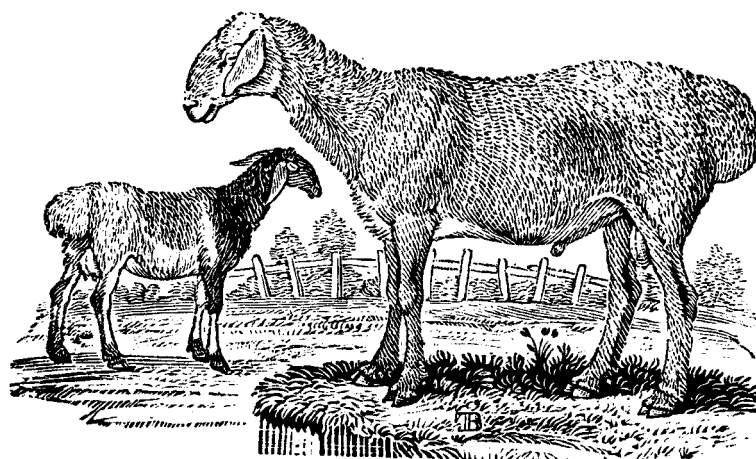
minutive friend and fellow presenter on *Top Gear*, Richard Hammond. The baby goats like to kick the host right where it hurts. Nature abounds in beautiful sunsets, fields, rainstorms, snows. And death—not all the piglets make it, some crushed inadvertently by their own mother. Clarkson still fancies impressive machines. The first tractor he buys is the biggest one available, a Lamborghini—too big for many of his farm’s gates and lanes. Above all, you see the unending hard work and wrestling with fortune that are every farmer’s lot.

SO POPULAR IS CLARKSON IN THE U.K. THAT HIS NAME GETS mentioned frequently in political connections. Will he ever run for office? A fluent writer, his curmudgeonly common sense appears twice weekly in newspapers, including *The Sunday Times*. Though he voted Remain in the landmark vote over Brexit, Clarkson is increasingly known as a critic of the Labour Party’s wokeness and regulatory zeal. Concerning Prime Minister Keir Starmer:

He’s annoying. Even when he’s not being annoying, he sounds annoying. He’s got somebody else’s spectacles. How much time does he spend every day on his hair? ...I just get up and have hair for the day... [A]ny man who concentrates on his appearance is a little suspect, in my view.

When Vice President J.D. Vance (“the underpresident of America,” as Clarkson described him in *The Sunday Times*) chose to vacation in the Cotswolds, the kerfuffle didn’t include the owner of Clarkson’s farm, even though the farm was included in the no-fly zone around Vance. That slightly inconvenienced the film crew who were supposed to be filming aerial shots for the fifth season of Clarkson’s show. But it didn’t disturb the host’s equanimity.

Britain’s real problems are not the fault of vacationing American politicians. “There are other countries in the world that have lost more standing than we have, but in the past 20 years [Britain] has fallen off a cliff,” Clarkson avers. “London’s really suffering, I think. You see streets and think, ‘God, this was thriving not that long ago; now it’s all boarded up or charity shops.... It’s a big change. It’s socialism.’” Like the apparently unstoppable influx of migrants and asylum seekers, socialism is a recurrent problem for which Britain’s educational and political elite seem to have forgotten the solution. If only they had the farmers’ stubborn good sense.



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