

# Motoring: I

JEROME K. JEROME

From Jerome K. Jerome, *My Life and Times* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, [1926]) p. 163. Jerome Klapka Jerome (1859–1927), journalist and man of letters, knew Shaw as a fellow-dramatist by the first decade of the century, if not earlier. On 16 March 1909 Shaw sailed with his wife and sister-in-law for five weeks' motoring through Algeria and Tunisia, taking his first car, a 28–30 h.p. De Dietrich delivered the previous December, and his chauffeur, Albert Kilsby, who was to remain with him until 1917.

Shaw is one of the kindest of men, but has no tenderness. His chief exercise, according to his own account, is public speaking; and his favourite recreation, thinking. He admitted to me once that there have been times when he has thought too much. He was motoring in Algiers, driving himself, with his chauffeur beside him, when out of his musing came to him the idea for a play.<sup>1</sup>

'What do you think of this?' he said, turning to his chauffeur; and went on then and there to tell the man all about it.

He had usually found his chauffeur a keen and helpful critic. But on this occasion, instead of friendly encouragement, he threw himself upon Shaw and, wrenching the wheel out of his hands, sat down upon him.

'Excuse me, Mr Shaw,' the man said later on; 'but it's such a damn good play that I didn't want you to die before you'd written it.'

Shaw had never noticed the precipice.

## NOTE

1. Shaw drafted *Press Cuttings* on this holiday; he also wrote to Edward McNulty about a completely different idea for a play – a comedy based on their relative fortunes (see *Collected Letters 1898–1910*, pp. 840–1).