

Arms and the Man

George Bernard Shaw

Play Summary

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The play begins in the bedroom of Raina Petkoff in a Bulgarian town in 1885, during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. As the play opens, Catherine Petkoff and her daughter, Raina, have just heard that the Bulgarians have scored a tremendous victory in a cavalry charge led by Raina's fiancé, Major Sergius Saranoff, who is in the same regiment as Raina's father, Major Paul Petkoff. Raina is so impressed with the noble deeds of her fiancé that she fears that she might never be able to live up to his nobility. At this very moment, the maid, Louka, rushes in with the news that the Serbs are being chased through the streets and that it is necessary to lock up the house and all of the windows. Raina promises to do so later, and Louka leaves. But as Raina is reading in bed, shots are heard, there is a noise at the balcony window, and a bedraggled enemy soldier with a gun appears and threatens to kill her if she makes a sound. After the soldier and Raina exchange some words, Louka calls from outside the door; she says that several soldiers want to search the house and investigate a report that an enemy Serbian soldier was seen climbing her balcony. When Raina hears the news, she turns to the soldier. He says that he is prepared to die, but he certainly plans to kill a few Bulgarian soldiers in her bedroom before he dies. Thus, Raina impetuously decides to hide him. The soldiers investigate, find no one, and leave. Raina then calls the man out from hiding; she nervously and absentmindedly sits on his gun, but she learns that it is not loaded; the soldier carries no cartridges. He explains that instead of carrying bullets, he always carries chocolates into battle. Furthermore, he is not an enemy; he is a Swiss, a professional soldier hired by Serbia. Raina gives him the last of her chocolate creams, which he devours, maintaining that she has indeed saved his life. Now that the Bulgarian soldiers are gone, Raina wants the "chocolate cream soldier" (as she calls him) to climb back down the drainpipe, but he refuses to; whereas he could climb up, he hasn't the strength to climb down. When Raina goes after her mother to help, the "chocolate cream soldier" crawls into Raina's bed and falls instantly asleep. In fact, when they re-enter, he is sleeping so soundly that they cannot awaken him.

Act II begins four months later in the garden of Major Petkoff's house. The middle-aged servant Nicola is lecturing Louka on the importance of having proper respect for the upper class, but Louka has too independent a soul to ever be a "proper" servant. She has higher plans for herself than to marry someone like Nicola, who, she insists, has the "soul of a servant." Major Petkoff arrives home from the war, and his wife Catherine greets him with two

bits of information: she suggests that Bulgaria should have annexed Serbia, and she tells him that she has had an electric bell installed in the library. Major Sergius Saranoff, Raina's fiancé and leader of the successful cavalry charge, arrives, and in the course of discussing the end of the war, he and Major Petkoff recount the now-famous story of how a Swiss soldier escaped by climbing up a balcony and into the bedroom of a noble Bulgarian woman. The women are shocked that such a crude story would be told in front of them. When the Petkoffs go into the house, Raina and Sergius discuss their love for one another, and Raina romantically declares that the two of them have found a "higher love."

When Raina goes to get her hat so that they can go for a walk, Louka comes in, and Sergius asks if she knows how tiring it is to be involved with a "higher love." Then he immediately tries to embrace the attractive maid. Since he is being so blatantly familiar, Louka declares that Miss Raina is no better than she; Raina, she says, has been having an affair while Sergius was away, but she refuses to tell Sergius who Raina's lover is, even though Sergius accidentally bruises Louka's arm while trying to wrest a confession from her. When he apologizes, Louka insists that he kiss her arm, but Sergius refuses and, at that moment, Raina re-enters. Sergius is then called away, and Catherine enters. The two ladies discuss how incensed they both are that Sergius related the tale about the escaping soldier. Raina, however, doesn't care if Sergius hears about it; she is tired of his stiff propriety. At that moment, Louka announces the presence of a Swiss officer with a carpetbag, calling for the lady of the house. His name is Captain Bluntschli. Instantly, they both know he is the "chocolate cream soldier" who is returning the Major's old coat that they disguised him in. As they make rapid, desperate plans to send him away, Major Petkoff hails Bluntschli and greets him warmly as the person who aided them in the final negotiations of the war; the old Major insists that Bluntschli must be their houseguest until he has to return to Switzerland.

Act III begins shortly after lunch and takes place in the library. Captain Bluntschli is attending to a large amount of confusing paperwork in a very efficient manner, while Sergius and Major Petkoff merely observe. Major Petkoff complains about a favorite old coat being lost, but at that moment Catherine rings the new library bell, sends Nicola after the coat, and astounds the Major by thus retrieving his lost coat. When Raina and Bluntschli are left alone, she compliments him on his looking so handsome now that he is washed and brushed. Then she assumes a high and noble tone and chides him concerning certain stories which he has told and the fact that she has had to lie for him. Bluntschli laughs at her "noble attitude" and says that he is pleased with her demeanor. Raina is amused; she says that Bluntschli is the first person to ever see through her pretensions, but she is perplexed that he didn't feel into the pockets of the old coat which she lent him; she had placed a photo of herself there with the inscription "To my Chocolate Cream Soldier." At this moment, a telegram is brought to Bluntschli relating the death of his father and the necessity of his coming home immediately to make arrangements for the six hotels that he has inherited. As Raina and Bluntschli leave the room, Louka comes in wearing her sleeve in a ridiculous fashion so that her bruise will be obvious. Sergius enters and asks if he can cure it now

with a kiss. Louka questions his true bravery; she wonders if he has the courage to marry a woman who is socially beneath him, even if he loved the woman. Sergius asserts that he would, but he is now engaged to a girl so noble that all such talk is absurd. Louka then lets him know that Bluntschli is his rival and that Raina will marry the Swiss soldier. Sergius is incensed. He sees Bluntschli and immediately challenges him to a duel; then he retracts when Raina comes in and accuses him of making love to Louka merely to spy on her and Bluntschli. As they are arguing, Bluntschli asks for Louka, who has been eavesdropping at the door. She is brought in, Sergius apologizes to her, kisses her hand, and thus they become engaged. Bluntschli asks permission to become a suitor for Raina's hand, and when he lists all of the possessions which he has (200 horses, 9600 pairs of sheets, ten thousand knives and forks, etc.), permission for the marriage is granted, and Bluntschli says that he will return in two weeks to marry Raina. Succumbing with pleasure, Raina gives a loving smile to her "chocolate cream soldier."

About *Arms and the Man*

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One of Shaw's aims in this play is to debunk the romantic heroics of war; he wanted to present a realistic account of war and to remove all pretensions of nobility from war. It is not, however, an anti-war play; instead, it is a satire on those attitudes which would glorify war. To create this satire, Shaw chose as his title the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the Roman epic which glorifies war and the heroic feats of man in war, and which begins, "Of arms and the man I sing. . . ."

When the play opens, we hear about the glorious exploits which were performed by Major Sergius Saranoff during his daring and magnificent cavalry raid, an event that turned the war against the Serbs toward victory for the Bulgarians. He thus becomes Raina Petkoff's ideal hero; yet the more that we learn about this raid, the more we realize that it was a futile, ridiculous gesture, one that bordered on an utter suicidal escapade.

In contrast, Captain Bluntschli's actions in Raina's bedroom strike us, at first, as being the actions of a coward. (Bluntschli is a Swiss, a professional soldier fighting for the Serbs.) He climbs up a water pipe and onto a balcony to escape capture, he threatens a defenseless woman with his gun, he allows her to hide him behind the curtains, and then he reveals that he carries chocolates rather than cartridges in his cartridge box because chocolates are more practical on the battlefield. Yet, as the play progresses, Bluntschli's unheroic actions become reasonable when we see that he survives, whereas had the war continued, Sergius' absurd heroic exploits would soon have left him dead.

Throughout the play, Shaw arranged his material so as to satirize the glories associated with war and to ultimately suggest that aristocratic pretensions

have no place in today's wars, which are won by using business-like efficiency, such as the practical matters of which Bluntschli is a master. For example, Bluntschli is able to deal with the business of dispensing an army to another town with ease, while this was a feat that left the aristocrats (Majors Petkoff and Saranoff) completely baffled. This early play by Shaw, therefore, cuts through the noble ideals of war and the "higher love" that Raina and Sergius claim to share; *Arms and the Man* presents a world where the practical man who lives with no illusions and no poetic views about either love or war is shown to be the superior creature.

Character List

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Captain Bluntschli A professional soldier from Switzerland who is serving in the Serbian army. He is thirty-four years old, and he is totally realistic about the stupidity of war.

Raina Petkoff The romantic idealist of twenty-three who views war in terms of noble and heroic deeds.

Sergius Saranoff The extremely handsome young Bulgarian officer who leads an attack against the Serbs which was an overwhelming success.

Major Petkoff The inept, fifty-year-old father of Raina; he is wealthy by Bulgarian standards, but he is also unread, uncouth, and incompetent.

Catherine Petkoff Raina's mother; she looks like and acts like a peasant, but she wears fashionable dressing gowns and tea gowns all the time in an effort to appear to be a Viennese lady.

Louka The Petkoffs' female servant; she is young and physically attractive, and she uses her appearance for ambitious preferment.

Nicola A realistic, middle-aged servant who is very practical.

Summary and Analysis Preface

Unlike *Pygmalion* or many of Shaw's other plays, there is no actual, separate preface to this particular play. However, there was a preface to the original volume of plays which contains this play and three others: *The Pleasant Plays*, 1898, revised in 1921. As Shaw noted elsewhere, a preface seldom or never concerns the play which is to follow the preface, and this preface is no exception. Instead, Shaw used this preface to comment upon the new style of drama (or simply what he calls New Drama), a name applied to dramas such as his or Ibsen's, plays which were not written to be commercial successes, but to be intellectual vehicles which would make the audience consider (or think about) their life — to be intellectually aware of their historical place in civilization. Shaw refuses to pander himself to popular demands for romantic (and thus unbelievable and unrealistic) situations. Ultimately, according to

Shaw, the theater should become a place for the airing of ideas and a place where sham and pretense can be exposed in a way that is delightful to the audience.

Summary and Analysis Act I

Summary

The play opens at night in a lady's bedchamber in a small Bulgarian town in 1885, the year of the Serbo-Bulgarian war. The room is decorated in the worst possible taste, a taste reflected in the mistress' (Catherine Petkoff's) desire to seem as cultured and as Viennese as possible. But the room is furnished with only cheap bits of Viennese things; the other pieces of furniture come from the Turkish Ottoman Empire, reflecting the long occupation by the Turks of the Balkan peninsula. On the balcony, standing and staring at the romantic beauty of the night, "intensely conscious that her own youth and beauty are a part of it," is young Raina Petkoff. Just inside, conspicuously visible, is a box of chocolate creams, which will play an important part later in this act and which will ultimately become a symbol of the type of war which Shaw will satirize.

Raina's mother, Catherine Petkoff, is a woman who could easily pass for a splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain fanner, but is determined to be a Viennese lady. As the play begins, Catherine is excited over the news that the Bulgarian forces have just won a splendid battle at Slivnitza against the Serbians, and the "hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment" who led them to victory is Raina's fiancé, Sergius Saranoff. She describes how Sergius boldly led a cavalry charge into the midst of the Serbs, scattering them in all directions. Raina wonders if such a popular hero will care any longer for her little affections, but she is nonetheless delighted about the news. She wonders if heroes such as Sergius esteem such heroic ideas because they have read too much Byron and Pushkin. Real life, as she knows, is quite different.

They are interrupted by the entry of Louka, a handsome and proud peasant girl, who announces that the Serbs have been routed and have scattered throughout the town and that some of the fugitives have been chased into the neighborhood. Thus, the doors must be secured since there might be fighting and shooting in the street below. Raina is annoyed that the fugitives must be killed, but she is immediately corrected — in war, everyone can be killed. Catherine goes below to fasten up the doors, and Louka shows Raina how to fasten the shutters if there is any shooting and then leaves to help bolt the rest of the house.

Left alone, Raina picks up her fiancé's picture, raises it above her head like a priestess worshipping it, and calls the portrait her "soul's hero." As she prepares for bed, shots are suddenly heard in the distance and then some more shots are heard; these are much nearer. She scrambles out of bed, rapidly blows out the candles, and immediately darts back into bed. She hears

more shots, and then she hears someone tampering with the shutters from outside; there is a glimmer of light, and then someone strikes a match and warns her not to try to run away. Raina is told to light a candle, and after she does so, she is able to see a man in a Serbian's officer's uniform; he is completely bespattered with mud and blood, and he warns her that if it becomes necessary, he will shoot her because if he is caught, he will be killed — and he has no intention of dying. When they hear a disturbance outside the house, the Serbian officer quickly snatches Raina's cloak that she is about to use to cover herself; ungentlemanlike, he keeps it, knowing that she won't want a group of army officers searching her room when she is clad in only a sheer nightgown. There is more noise downstairs, and Louka is heard at the door; she says that there is a search party downstairs, and if Raina doesn't let them in, they will break down the door. Suddenly the Serbian officer loses his courage; he tells Raina that he is done for. He will shoot the first man who breaks in and "it will not be nice." Raina impulsively changes her mind and decides to hide him behind the curtains. Catherine, Louka, and a Russian officer dressed in a Bulgarian uniform enter, and after inspecting the balcony and hearing Raina testify that no one came in, they leave. (Louka, however, notices something behind the curtain and sees the revolver lying on the ottoman; she says nothing, however.) Raina slams and locks the door after them.

When the Serbian officer emerges and offers his thanks, he explains that he is not really a Serbian officer; he is a professional soldier, a Swiss citizen, in fact, and he now wishes that he had joined with the Bulgarians rather than with the Serbs. He asks to stay a minute to collect his thoughts, and Raina agrees, deciding to sit down also, but as she sits on the ottoman, she sits on the man's pistol, and she lets out a scream. Raina now realizes what it was that Louka was staring at, and she is surprised that the others didn't notice it. She is frightened of the gun, but the soldier tells her there is no need to be — it is not loaded: he keeps chocolates rather than bullets in his cartridge holder. In fact, he wishes he had some chocolates now. In mock scorn, Raina goes to the chest of drawers and returns with a half-eaten box of chocolates, the remainder of which he immediately devours. Raina is shocked to hear him say that only foolish young soldiers or else stupid ones like those in charge of the recent attack on the Serbs at Slivnitza carry bullets; wise and experienced soldiers carry chocolates. Then he offends her further (and still innocently, of course) by explaining how unprofessional the cavalry charge against the Serbs was, and if there had not been a stupid mistake on the part of the Serbs, the Bulgarians would have been massacred. Then the soldier says that the Bulgarian "hero," the leader of the troops, acted "like an operatic tenor . . . shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills." He says that the fellow was the laughingstock of everyone present: "Of all the fools let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest." Only a stupid mistake carried the day for him. Raina then takes the portrait of Sergius and shows it to the officer, who agrees that this was indeed the person who was "charging the windmills and imagining he was doing the finest thing."

Angry at the derogatory remarks about her "heroic" betrothed, Raina orders the stranger to leave. But he balks; he says that whereas he could climb up

the balcony, he simply can't face the descent. He is so exhausted that he tells her to simply give out the alarm — he's beaten. Raina tries to spark some courage in him, but realizes that he is more prudent than daring. Raina is at a loss; she simply doesn't know what to do with him: he can't be caught in the Petkoff house, the richest house in Bulgaria and the only one to have a library and an inside staircase. She then remembers an opera by Verdi, *Ernani*, in which a fugitive throws himself on the mercy of some aristocratic people; she thinks that perhaps this might be the solution because, according to the opera, the hospitality of a nobleman is sacred and inviolable. In response, the soldier tells her that his father is a hospitable man himself; in fact, he owns six hotels in Switzerland. Then falling asleep, he kisses her hand. Raina panics. She insists that he stay awake until she can fetch her mother, but before she can get out of the room, he has crawled into her bed and is asleep in such a trance that when Raina returns with her mother, they cannot shake him awake. His fatigue is so great that Raina tells her mother: "The poor darling is worn out. Let him sleep." This comment arouses Catherine's stern reproach, and the curtain falls on the first act.

Analysis

In reading a Shavian play, one should pay attention to Shaw's staging directions at the beginning of the act. The stage directions here call for the scenery to convey the impression of cheap Viennese pretentious aristocracy incongruously combined with good, solid Bulgarian commonplace items. Likewise, since Raina will ultimately be seen as a person who will often assume a pose for dramatic effect, the act opens with her being (in Shaw's words) "intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." As we find out later, she even listens at doors and waits until the proper moment to make the most effective, dramatic entrance.

As noted in the "Introduction" to these notes, the title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing. . ."), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw will use the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war (the Serbo-Bulgarian war) in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he will also satirize romantic notions of valor and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism. The dramatic shift that will occur in the play involves two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) who, rejecting their original positions instead of marrying each other, will each become engaged to a practical realist — Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Raina is seen, at first, as the romantic idealist, but she is also characterized as being a fleeting realist when she wonders if her idealism and Sergius' idealism might be due simply to the fact that they have read so much poetry by Byron and other romantics. Likewise, Raina wants to glory in the noble idealism of the war, but she is also deeply troubled by its cruelty: "What glory

is there in killing wretched fugitives?" In this early comment, we have her rationale for her later hiding and, thus, her saving Bluntschli's life.

Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina seems to want to live according to the romantic idealism to which she and Sergius aspire. She knows that he has, in effect, placed her on too high a pedestal, but she does want to make an effort to live "up to his high standards." For example, after hearing of his heroic feats, she holds up his photo and "elevates it, like a priestess," vowing never to be unworthy of him. This vow, however, as we soon see, will not last too long.

Captain Bluntschli's arrival through the balcony doors is, in itself, a highly melodramatic and romantic stage entrance. In fact, almost everything about Act I is contrived — the lady's bedroom, the concealment of the fugitive behind a curtain, the threat of a bloody fight, the matter of chocolate creams, and, finally, the enemy soldier falling asleep in the lady's bed — all of this smacks of artificiality and is juxtaposed against Captain Bluntschli's realistic appraisal of war and his matter-of-fact assertion that, from a practical viewpoint, Sergius' military charge was as foolish as Don Quixote's charge on the Windmills. And actually, while Raina ridicules Captain Bluntschli for his cowardice, for his hiding behind a woman's curtains, for his inordinate fear (he has been under fire for three days and his nerves are "shot to pieces"), and for his extraordinary desire for chocolate creams, she is nevertheless attracted to him, and even though she pretends to be offended at his comments about Sergius, she is secretly happy that her fiancé is not as perfect as we were earlier led to believe that he was.

At the end of the act, Raina returns to her artificial pretensions as she tries to impress Bluntschli with her family's aristocratic aspirations, bragging that her father chose the only house in the city with an inside stairway, and a library, and, furthermore, Raina says, she attends the opera every year in Bucharest. Ironically, it is from romantic operas that Raina derives many of her romantic ideals, and she uses one of Verdi's romantic operas as her rationale for hiding this practical Swiss professional soldier. The final irony of the act is that the professional man of war is sleeping as soundly as a baby in Raina's bed, with her hovering over him, feeling protective about him.

Summary and Analysis Act II

Summary

Some four months have passed since the first act, and a peace treaty has just been signed. The setting for this act is in Major Petkoff's garden. Louka is standing onstage in a disrespectful attitude, smoking a cigarette and talking to Nicola, a middle-aged servant who has "the complacency of the servant who values himself on his rank in servitude." The opening dialogue informs us that Nicola is engaged to Louka, but that he has reservations about her deportment. He refuses to marry a person who is "disrespectful" to her superiors; he plans to open a shop in Sofia, and he thinks that the success of

the shop will depend on the goodwill of his employees, and he knows that if they spread bad reports about him, his shop will never be successful. When Louka maintains that she knows secret things about the mistress and the master, Nicola reminds her that all servants know secrets about their employers, but the secret of being a good servant is to keep these things secret and to always be discreet; if servants begin telling secrets, then no one will ever employ them again. Louka is furious and says that Nicola has "the soul of a servant"; Nicola agrees — "That is," he says, "the secret of success in service."

Their discussion is interrupted by the entrance of Major Petkoff, an "insignificant, unpolished man" who has just returned from the war. He sends Louka into the house to get his wife and to also bring him some coffee. Catherine comes out and welcomes her husband, and he tells her that the war is over, the peace treaty is signed, and all is now peaceful. When he inquires about his wife's health, she tells him that she has a sore throat. The Major maintains that the soreness comes "from washing [her] neck every day." He himself does not believe in these silly modern notions of washing. "It can't be good for the health; it's not natural. There was an Englishman at Philippopolis who used to wet himself all over with cold water every morning when he got up." He maintains that the English climate is so dirty that the English have to wash, but others don't; his father, for example, lived to be ninety-eight years old and never had a bath in his entire life.

As Catherine is explaining to her husband about the installation of an electric bell in the library, the Major is confused over its use because — in his opinion — if he wants someone, he will shout for them. At this time, Major Sergius Saranoff arrives; he is "a tall romantically handsome man" and is the original of the portrait in Raina's room in the first act. He is roundly congratulated for his famous charge against the Serbs. Sergius, however, does not appreciate the compliment, because even though he was successful, he participated in a maneuver where the Russian consultants failed; thus, he did not accomplish his great success by the rulebook. "Two Cossack colonels had their regiments routed on the most correct principles of scientific warfare. [Furthermore,] Two major-generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette," and now the two colonels who failed are promoted to generals and he (Sergius) who succeeded is still a major; therefore, he has resigned.

As Catherine is protesting that Sergius should not resign — the women, she says, are for him — Sergius suddenly asks, "Where is Raina?" At that very moment, Raina enters sweepingly, announcing, "Raina is here." Sergius drops chivalrously on one knee to kiss her hand. While Raina's father is impressed with the fact that Raina "always appears at the right moment," her mother is annoyed because she knows that Raina always listens at doorways in order to make her entrance at exactly the right moment. Catherine pronounces it to be "an abominable habit."

Raina then welcomes her father home, and again they discuss Sergius' military career. Sergius now views war in a very cynical manner; according to him, there is nothing heroic nor romantic about it. "Soldiering is the coward's

art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. . . . Never fight [your enemy] on equal terms." Furthermore, he now views soldiering as having too much of the taint of being a trade business, and he *despises* trade; this is, of course, an allusion to Captain Blutschli, who, of course, is in trade, and it is also a reference to Louka's fiancé, Nicola, who wants to go into trade. To prove his point, Sergius asks them all to consider the case of the Swiss officer (Bluntschli) who was able to deal very shrewdly and to make clever bargains concerning prisoners. As a result, soldiering has been "reduced to a matter of trading and bartering." He adds that the man was merely "a commercial traveler in uniform."

Since the subject has come up, Major Petkoff encourages Sergius to tell the story about the Swiss officer who climbed into a Bulgarian lady's bedroom in order to escape capture. Raina, recognizing herself as the woman of the story, pretends to be offended. Major Petkoff therefore tries to get Sergius to help him with some army details, and Catherine instructs Sergius to remain with Raina while Catherine discusses some business with her husband. By this ruse, she is able to leave the two young people alone.

Alone together, Raina looks upon Sergius with admiration and worship: "My hero! My king!" — to which he responds, "My queen!" Raina sees Sergius only in terms of the knight of olden times who goes forth to fight heroically, guided only by his lady's love. She believes that the two of them have truly found what she calls the perfect "higher love." When Louka is heard entering the house, Raina leaves to get her hat so that they can go for a walk and be alone. In Louka's presence, Sergius swaggers a bit and then asks Louka if she knows what "higher love" is. Whatever it is, he says, he finds it "fatiguing" to keep it up: "one feels the need of some relief after it." He then embraces Louka, who warns him to be careful, or, at least, if he won't let her go, he should step back where they cannot be seen. After she makes a sly comment about the possibility of Raina's spying on them, Sergius defends Raina and their "higher love," and Louka maintains that she will never understand "gentlefolk" because while Sergius is professing love for Raina, he is flirting with her behind Raina's back, and, furthermore, Raina is doing the same thing. Sergius tries to reprimand Louka for gossiping so about her mistress, but he is visibly upset and dramatically strikes his forehead. He insists that Louka tell him who his rival is, but she will not do so, especially since he has just reprimanded her for talking about her mistress. She tells him that she never actually saw the man; she only heard his voice outside Miss Raina's bedroom. But she knows that if the man ever comes here again, Raina will marry him. Sergius is furious, and he grips her so tightly that he bruises her arm; he reminds her that because of her gossiping, she has the "soul of a servant," the same accusation which she made earlier about Nicola. Louka retaliates by pointing out that Sergius himself is a liar, and, furthermore, she maintains that she is worth "six of her [Raina]." As Louka begins to leave, Sergius wants to apologize for hurting a woman, no matter what the status of that woman is, but Louka will not accept an apology; she wants more. When Sergius wants to pay her for the injury, Louka says that she wants him to kiss her bruised arm. Surprised, Sergius refuses, and Louka majestically picks up the serving pieces and leaves, just as Raina enters, dressed in the latest

fashion of Vienna — of the previous year. Immediately, Catherine calls down that her husband needs Sergius for a few minutes to discuss a business matter.

When Sergius is gone, Catherine enters, and she and Raina express their irritation that "that Swiss" told the entire story of his night in Raina's bedroom. Raina maintains that if she had him here now she would "cram him with chocolate creams." Catherine is frightened that if Sergius finds out the truth about what happened, the engagement will be broken off. Suddenly, however, Raina reveals that she would not care, and that, furthermore, she has always wanted to say something dreadful so as to shock Sergius' propriety, "to scandalize the five senses out of him." She half-hopes that he will find out about her "chocolate cream soldier." She then leaves her mother in a state of shock.

Louka enters and announces the presence of a Serbian soldier at the door, a soldier who is asking for the lady of the house; he has sent his card bearing his name, "Captain Bluntschli," thus giving us for the first time the name of the "chocolate cream soldier." When Catherine reads the name and hears that the caller is Swiss, she realizes that he is the "chocolate cream soldier" and that he is returning the old coat of Major Petkoff's which they gave him when he left. Catherine gives Louka strict instructions to make sure that the library door is shut; then, Louka is to send in the captain and have Nicola bring the visitor's bag to her. When Louka returns with the captain, Catherine frantically explains that her husband and future son-in-law are here and that he must leave immediately. Captain Bluntschli agrees reluctantly and explains that he only wants to take the coat out of his bag, but Catherine urges him to leave it; she will have his bag sent to him later. As Bluntschli is writing out his address, Major Petkoff comes in and greets the captain warmly and enthusiastically. Immediately, Major Petkoff tells the captain that they are in desperate need of help in working out the details of sending troops and horses to Philippopolis. Captain Bluntschli immediately pinpoints the problem, and as they are about to go into the library to explain the details, Raina enters and bumps into the captain and surprisedly exclaims loudly: "Oh! the chocolate cream soldier." She immediately regains her composure and explains that she was cooking a kind of dessert and had made a chocolate cream soldier for its decoration and that Nicola sat a pile of plates on it. At that moment, Nicola brings in the captain's bag, saying that Catherine told him to do so; when Catherine denies it, Major Petkoff thinks that Nicola must be losing his mind. He reprimands Nicola (for doing what Nicola has been commanded to do), and at this point Nicola is so confused that he drops the bag, almost hitting the Major's foot. As the women try to placate the Major, he, in turn, urges Captain Bluntschli to remain as their houseguest until he has to return to Switzerland. Even though Catherine has been subtly suggesting that Captain Bluntschli leave, Bluntschli agrees to remain.

Analysis

Arms and the Man is an early Shawian play, and in it, Shaw used certain techniques that he was never to use again. In the first act, for example, the

entire act has a farcical note about it and the use of a screen or a curtain for a character to hide behind was a traditional technique used only in comedies. The coat episode in the third act is a contrived bit of farce that amuses the audience, but it cheapens the intellectual aspect of the drama because it contributes nothing other than its own farcical element.

In Act II, the structure of the act is more serious, but it also uses several traditional farcical elements. For example, there is the use of the exaggerated means whereby Sergius can deceive Raina while trying to make love with Raina's maid, the story told in the army camp about the soldier who escapes into a lady's bedroom (while the ladies of the story have to listen in pretended dismay), the sudden appearance of the captain and the hasty decisions which the ladies must undertake, and finally the sudden surprise that occurs when we discover that Captain Petkoff knows Bluntschli — all of these circumstances are elements of melodrama or farce.

In the early part of the act, we see Louka as an ingenious maid who refuses to acknowledge that she has "the soul of a servant," a fault that she accuses Nicola of having. Later, however, when Sergius tells her that she possesses the soul of a servant, his comment stings. We do, however, admire the way that Louka is able to dismiss Nicola and to manipulate the supposedly superior and aristocratic Sergius.

When we meet Sergius and hear of his total disillusionment with war and with "soldiering [which] is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of the way when you are weak," we are then prepared for the fact that Sergius will not be a romantic idealist for long. His new views on war should prepare us for a significant change in his total outlook on life; thus, he will soon reject Raina's idealistic "higher love" in favor of a more direct love with the attractive and practical Louka, a maid who says forthrightly that if Sergius is going to embrace her, then at least they should stand back where they can't be seen.

With Louka, Sergius can admit that there are at least six different people occupying himself and then wonder aloud, "Which of the six is the real man? That's the question that torments me." We now know that the real Sergius is not the one with whom Raina has fallen in love, the one with the "higher love." Thus, by the end of this act, Shaw has set up all of the necessary motives and reasons for Sergius and Raina to break off their engagement and marry someone else.

Summary and Analysis Act III

Summary

This act shifts to the Petkoffs' library, a setting which Shaw uses to let us know that this is a very poor excuse for a library; it consists of only a single room with a single shelf of old worn-out paper-covered novels; the rest of the

room is more like a sitting room with another ottoman in it, just like the one in Raina's room in the first act. The room is also fitted with an old kitchen table which serves as a writing table. At the opening of the act, Bluntschli is busy at work preparing orders, with a businesslike regularity, for the disposition of the Bulgarian army. Petkoff is more of a hindrance than a help, for he constantly interrupts to see if he can be of any help. Finally, his wife tells him to stop interrupting. Petkoff, in turn, complains that all that he needs to be comfortable is his favorite old coat, which he can't find. Catherine rings for Nicola and tells the servant to go to the blue closet and fetch his master's old coat. Petkoff is so certain that it is not there that he is willing to make a bet of an expensive piece of jewelry with her. Sergius is about to enter a bet also, but Nicola suddenly returns with the coat. Petkoff is completely astonished and perplexed when Nicola announces that it was indeed hanging in the blue closet.

At this moment, Bluntschli finishes the last order, gives it to Sergius to take to his soldiers, and then asks Petkoff to follow to make sure that Sergius doesn't make a mistake. Petkoff asks his wife to come along because she is good at giving commands. Left alone with Raina, Bluntschli expresses his astonishment at an army where "officers send for their wives to keep discipline."

Raina then tells Captain Bluntschli how much better he looks now that he is clean, and she inquires about his experiences after he left her bedroom. She lets him know that the entire story has been told so many times that both her father and her fiancé are aware of the story, but not the identities of the people involved. In fact, Raina believes that "if Sergius knew, he would challenge you and kill you in a duel." Bluntschli says that he hopes that Raina won't tell, but Raina tells him of her desire to be perfectly open and honest with Sergius. Because of Bluntschli, Raina says, she has now told two lies — one to the soldiers looking for him in her room and another one just now about the chocolate pudding — and she feels terrible about lying; Bluntschli cannot take her seriously. In fact, he tells her that when "you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say." At first, Raina is indignant, but then she is highly amused that Bluntschli has seen through the disguise that she has used since she was a child: "You know, I've always gone on like that," she tells him.

When Raina asks him what he thought of her for giving him a portrait of herself, Bluntschli tells her that he never received it because he never reached into the pocket of the coat where Raina had put it. He is not concerned until he learns that Raina inscribed upon it "To my Chocolate Cream Soldier." In the meantime, Bluntschli confesses, he pawned the coat, thinking that was the safest place for it. Raina is furious, and she accuses him of having a "shopkeeping mind." At this point, they are interrupted by Louka, who brings Bluntschli some letters and telegrams, which inform him that his father has died and that Bluntschli has inherited several hotels which he will have to manage. He must leave immediately. Alarmed, Raina follows him out.

Nicola enters and sees Louka with her sleeve rolled up so as to expose her bruised arm, and he reprimands her. Then they argue over the duties and obligations of being a servant. Louka says that she absolutely refuses to act like a servant, and Nicola answers that he is quite willing to release her from their engagement if she can better herself. Then, he would have another customer for his shop, one who would bring him good business. When Sergius enters, Nicola leaves immediately, and Sergius, noticing the bruise on Louka's arm, asks if he can cure it now by kissing it. Louka reminds him of his place and of hers. She wonders aloud if Sergius is a brave man and if poor people are any less brave than wealthy people. Sergius answers that in war any man can have courage: "the courage to rage and [to] kill is cheap." Louka then asks if Sergius has true courage; that is, would he dare to marry someone whom he loved if that person was socially beneath him? She asserts that she thinks that Sergius would "be afraid of what other people would say," and thus he would never have the courage to marry beneath him. Sergius contradicts her until Louka tells him that Raina will never marry him, that Raina is going to marry the Swiss soldier. As she turns to go, Sergius grabs her and holds her firmly; as he threatens her and questions the truth of her accusation, she wonders if anyone would believe the fact that she is now in his arms. He releases her with the assertion that if he ever touches her again, it will be as her fiancé.

As Louka leaves, Bluntschli enters and is immediately told by Sergius where he is to be on the following morning; they will duel on horseback and with sabres. Bluntschli maintains that as the challenged party, it is his privilege to choose the weapons, and he plans to have a machine gun. But when Bluntschli sees that Sergius is serious, he agrees to meet him with a sabre, but he refuses to fight on horseback because it is too dangerous. Raina enters then, in time to hear their last arrangements. Bluntschli explains that he is an expert with the sword and that he will see to it that neither of them are hurt; afterward, he will leave immediately for Switzerland and no one will ever hear of the incident. Sergius then accuses Bluntschli of receiving favors from Raina which he (Sergius) has never enjoyed — that is, she received Bluntschli in her bedroom. Bluntschli points out that she did so "with a pistol at her head. . . . I'd have blown out her brains if she'd uttered a cry." Sergius cannot accept the story that there is nothing between the two because if it were true, then Captain Bluntschli would not have come back to the Petkoff house. He could have sent the coat; he came only to see Raina.

When Sergius makes further accusations, Raina reminds him that she saw him and Louka in each other's arms, and she now understands about their relationship. Sergius realizes that his and Raina's engagement is over, and he therefore cancels the duel with Bluntschli, who is pleased to get out of it since he didn't want to fight in the first place. Raina, however, is furious, and she tells Bluntschli that Sergius had Louka spy on them and that Sergius rewarded Louka by making love to her. As they continue to argue, Bluntschli tries to get Sergius to stop because he is losing the argument. Suddenly, Bluntschli asks where Louka is. Raina maintains that she is listening at the door, and as Sergius stoutly denies such a thing, Raina goes to the door and drags Louka inside; she was, in fact, eavesdropping. Louka is not ashamed;

she says that her love is at stake and that her feelings for Sergius are stronger than Raina's feelings for the "chocolate cream soldier."

At this point, Major Petkoff enters in short sleeves; his old coat is being mended. When Nicola enters with it, Raina helps him on with the coat and deftly removes the inscribed portrait from the coat pocket. Thus, when her father reaches for the photograph to ask Raina the meaning of a photograph of her with the inscription: "Raina, to her Chocolate Cream Soldier: A Souvenir," the photo is missing! Major Petkoff is confused and asks Sergius if he is the "chocolate cream soldier." The Major responds indignantly that he is not. Then Bluntschli explains that he is the "chocolate cream soldier" and that Raina saved his life. Petkoff is further confused when Raina points out that Louka is the true object of Sergius' affections, despite the fact that Louka is engaged to Nicola, who denies this and says that he is hoping for Louka's good recommendation when he opens his shop.

Suddenly Louka feels as though she is being bartered, and she demands an apology; when Sergius kisses her hand in apology, she reminds him that his touch now makes her his "affianced wife," and even though Sergius had forgotten his earlier statement, he still holds true to his word and claims Louka for his own. At this moment, Catherine enters and is shocked to find Louka and Sergius together. Louka explains that Raina is fond only of Bluntschli, and before Raina can answer, Bluntschli explains that such a young and beautiful girl as Raina could not be in love with a thirty-four-year-old soldier who is an incurable romantic; the only reason he came back, he says, was not to return the coat but to get just one more glance at Raina, but he fears that she is no more than seventeen years old. Raina then tells Bluntschli that he is indeed foolishly romantic if he thinks that she, a twenty-three-year-old woman, is a seventeen-year-old girl. At this point, Bluntschli asks permission to be a suitor for Raina's hand. When he is reminded that Sergius comes from an old family which kept at least twenty horses, Bluntschli begins to enumerate all of the possessions (including two hundred horses) which he owns; he fails, however, to mention that his possessions are connected with the hotel business that he has just inherited. His list of possessions is so impressive that it is agreed that he shall indeed marry Raina, who is delighted with her "chocolate cream soldier." As Bluntschli leaves, with the promise of being back in two weeks, Sergius looks in wonder and comments, "What a man! Is he a man!"

Analysis

After the farcical bit about the discovery of the old coat in the blue closet, which perplexes Major Petkoff, Shaw then gets down to the resolution of the drama, which involves the revealing of Raina's, Sergius', and Bluntschli's true natures.

First, in Bluntschli's interview with Raina, we see him as the practical man who will not let Raina assume any of her poses; he will laugh at all of the poses that she assumes. Captain Bluntschli, while being charmed and captivated by Raina, refuses to take her poses seriously; that is, he delights in

her posturing, but he is not deceived by them: "When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say." Thus, Bluntschli forces Raina to reveal her true nature, and she is delighted that someone has seen through her guise and has allowed her to come down off her pedestal. We were earlier prepared for this revelation when she told her mother that she would like to shock Sergius; already, we have seen that she finds "higher love" to be something of a strain on her. Thus, it is ultimately a relief for her to discard all of her artificial poses and finally become herself.

Likewise, Bluntschli changes. While he will not tolerate posturing, yet, since he is such a plainspoken man, we are surprised to discover that beneath his exterior, he has a romantic soul — that is, he came back with the Major's coat only to have one more glimpse of Raina, with whom he is infatuated. Therefore, as the practical man is seen to change, so also does Sergius, whom we saw very early in the second act confess to being tired of playing this game of the ideal of the "higher love." He is immensely relieved not to have to be the over-idealized, noble object of Raina's love; he found trying to live up to her expectations tiresome. After discovering that there is no nobility or heroics connected with war, he is delighted to discover that Raina's heroics are not for him; as a result, he turns to the more basic but yet attractive Louka.

The resolution of the drama is brought about by the simple technique of having all of the characters recognize their basic nature and yield to it. Consequently, the ending of this comedy is similar to most classic comedies — that is, after a mix-up or confusion between the lovers, everyone is paired with the proper person finally.