

arm of one was but a poor barrier against so large a force. Another moment and the flooring would give no evidence of the secret that it held, for the queen and her bower-maidens were replacing it with all speed. Again the tread of the approaching conspirators ; the sentinel had paid for his fidelity with death. Is there no arm can save ?

At this moment, as with a flash of inspiration, the thought came into her mind. Catherine Douglas, one of the bower-maidens, rushed forward and thrust her arm through the staple of the removed bolt, and for a little while a woman's arm held a hundred men at bay.

It was a terrible moment, and as the poor bruised arm gave way at last Catherine Douglas fell fainting to the floor.

Sir Richard Graeme and his followers, having forced an entrance, made hot and eager search, but without avail. One of them placed his dagger at the Queen's breast and demanded to know where the king was, and would have killed her had not the young Graeme caught his arm and said, " She is a woman ; we seek the king." At last, tired by their fruitless search, they left the hall, and then, unfortunate's, the king requested the women to draw him up from the vault again. This they attempted to do, with ropes made from the sheets from the bed, but they were not strong enough, and one of them, a sister of Catherine Douglas, was pulled down into the vault below. Attracted by the noise of this attempt, the conspirators returned, and the traitor