

# A TERRIBLE INHERITANCE.

By GRANT ALLEN.

## I.

THE garden-party at the Woolryches' was a great success. Harry Prior, the young doctor who had come to Melbury some weeks before, had never seen Bertha Woolrych looking sweeter or prettier in her innocent girlhood than she did that memorable Tuesday. Bertha was a tall and stately girl, with jet-black hair and large dark eyes, and Harry had admired her from the very first day he saw her, with an admiration ever steadily increasing. As she moved about gracefully among the groups of scattered guests on the lawn that cloudless August day, with a happy smile and a pleasant word for all alike, Harry said to himself, with a thrill in his heart, "Whatever comes, I must make her mine for ever and ever."

The Woolryches' house was one of the numerous handsome modern buildings that crowd the old Park Hill and overlook the sea at Melbury Regis; and the hall was filled with endless mementoes of Sir Arthur Woolrych's many campaigns in all climates of the earth, from Japan to the Cape, and from Canada to India. Snowshoes and toboggans in the big trophy by the front door jostled oddly

against Zulu assegais and Australian boomerangs; West African calabashes and Jamaican obeah-sticks hung side by side with American buffalo-heads and long woven strings of beads and wampum. The whole house was indeed a sort of amateur domestic museum, crammed to the attics with those numberless curiosities which Sir Arthur's taste for queer outlandish places and people had brought together from the four quarters of this strangely peopled modern world of ours.

A group of young men lounged idly chatting in the hospitable vestibule. One of them took down a quaint-looking bow and a bamboo-tipped arrow from a nail in the hall. "Odd sort of archery, this," he said with a smile to his next neighbour. "Andaman Islander's, or something of the sort. I wonder, now, whether one could hit a target at fifty yards with it?"

"I wouldn't advise you to try, Wilson," the elder of the two answered carelessly. "Sir Arthur wouldn't like your playing with his curios. He's a rusty crusty old gentleman of the old school, you know, and he thinks a lot of these rusty crusty old spears and arrowheads of his. You won't get asked to Lady Woolrych's next