

## THE COUNTESS DECIDES

the great dam at Assouan, and was crowded with distinguished visitors on their way to the ceremony. If Cairo could be likened to a social dam, the Ptolemy Park Hotel might be said to receive the irrigating result of the overflow, and those who had not secured accommodation in advance now applied in vain at the cashier's desk.

The arrival of the Countess was much less imposing than had been generally expected; but then Lord Warlingham himself had come by tramcar a few days before, so it was universally agreed that members of the nobility could not always be counted upon to indulge in the display popularly supposed to pertain to their rank. The Countess drove up to the main entrance in an ordinary hotel carriage, hired for the trip at Cairo. Her sole attendant was one exceedingly plain maid, who inquired tartly of the gold-laced individual who came to open the carriage door if the rooms of the Countess of Croydon were ready, and was obsequiously assured that they were. Gold-lace led the way, and the Countess, looking neither to the right nor the left, followed. The guests had an excellent view of her, and even the women admitted that she was more than handsome, carrying herself with an air of distinction. They agreed, however, that she was not so young as she appeared to be, and hinted that the plain maid must understand the art of making up in a manner that would do credit to an actress. The next problem was: Would she appear at dinner, or would the meals be served in her own sitting-room? The puzzle was solved long before dinner was announced. Every afternoon the denizens of the hotel gathered in the ample hall, in the reading-room, and elsewhere for tea; in fact, for all the difference of living, each one might have been at the Metropole in Brighton,