

THE COUNTESS DECIDES

THE arrival of the Countess caused a subdued flutter in the society which frequented the edge of the desert. The Ptolemy Park Hotel, as everyone knows, occupies a depression in the sand a short distance from the Great Pyramid. It is rather a fashionable resort, and you may live somewhat better at the Park than on the sand which is there, as the ancient humorist remarked. It became known that the Countess of Croydon had taken a suite of rooms at the hotel, and the inhabitants thereof wondered whether they would be permitted a sight of this great lady, for she was said to be extremely eccentric, fairly young, admittedly beautiful, and undoubtedly rich. Although she owned a desirable town house, she had never occupied it, and London society knew nothing of her personality. At last this mysterious young lady was about to issue from her seclusion and brave the publicity of a popular hotel.

Naturally the guests of the Ptolemy Park were anxious to see a person so much talked of, and bets stood at ten to one that she would not come. The knowing ones, predicting disappointment, said that on several previous occasions the Countess had been announced to appear at certain social functions in London, but invariably had failed at the last moment. Her apartments had unquestionably been taken, and rooms were at a premium, because the season had just begun with more than ordinary promise. Cairo was buzzing with excitement over the opening of