

## A DEPUTY SHERIFF HITS THE TRAIL 273

So up we went, passed room 10, and on along the corridor to number 17. Pete was in the lead. I was behind with Yuma.

I saw Pete raise his head, as he came to room 17, in a curious jerk. It was a movement of a man of the open, hearing something dubious, and going on guard. Yuma and I intuitively stopped. We had been chatting as we came along the corridor, but ceased abruptly—not only our chatter, but moved more slowly.

The door of number 17 was open. Pete looked in at the hinge and dropped his hand to his hip, and then missed his belt, discarded in the civilisation of the city. Yuma dipped oddly into his tail-coat, a heavy swallow-tail, such as is esteemed highly by so many rangemen, and marks the occasion festive. He drew forth a Smith and Webly and thrust it into Pete's hand. Then Pete, gun in hand, backed on to our toes and, with his left hand behind him, thrust us back, turned his head slightly, and whispered: "Keep talking, you!"

"Oh! Let me see," said Yuma in a great voice, "which I suppose the hotel is plumb full, with the annual being on?"

And back, back we went—to room 10, and backed in there.

"What is it?" asked Yuma.

Pete turned fully and said:

"A gent in a blue suit, with a little silver star on his left breast, and a big silver-mounted gun in his fist, sitting in the chair—that's what it is."