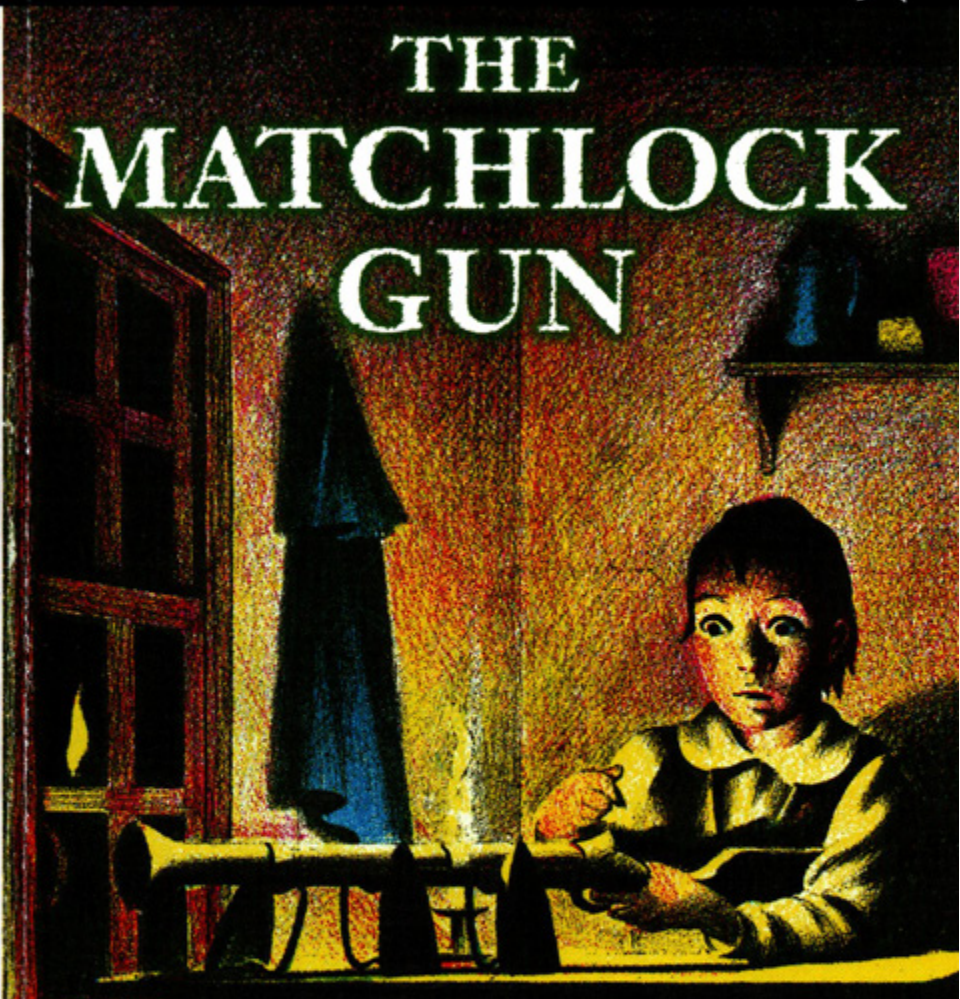


Edward's family had never needed to use this gun before.



THE MATCHLOCK GUN



Winner of
the John Newbery Medal



by Walter D. Edmonds
Illustrated by Paul Lantz

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The Putnam & Grosset Group



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Summary: In 1756, during the French and Indian War in upper
New York State, ten-year-old Edward is determined to protect his
home and family with the ancient, and much too heavy, Spanish gun
that his father had given him before leaving home to fight the enemy.

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To my Godson

Nicholas Biddle Edmonds



FOREWORD

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

PERHAPS you would like to know the rest of the lullaby that Gertrude Van Alstyne sings in this story. It is a real old Dutch song, and lots of mothers sang it to their children up and down the Hudson Valley and in and around Albany in 1757, when New York State was still a British Colony, when the French were still leading

Indians out of Canada against the settlers, and when the raid that came all the way to Guilderland, just outside of Albany City, took place.

This is the way the song goes:

*“Trip a trop a troenje;
De varken en de boenjen,
De koejen en de klaver,
De paardje en de haver,
De kalfje en de langen gras,
De eenjen en de vater-plas;
So groet myn klynen pappetje vas.”*

and this also is the translation:

“Up and down on a little throne; (Mother’s
or Father’s knee)

The pigs are in the beans,
The cows are in the clover,
The colts are in the stable,
The calf is in the long grass,

The ducks are in the pond;
So big my little baby was."

The Van Alstynes were real people. Teunis was a Dutchman, as most of the early settlers round Albany were. His wife, Gertrude, was a Palatine, which meant that her people originally came from the small states, called the Palatinate, along the upper part of the River Rhine in Germany. Their lands were devastated by war; they were politically persecuted by both French and Germans; and they left their homes, going first to Holland, then to England, and finally coming to America, because they wanted to be free. They mingled well with the Dutch—except for a few crusty specimens like the Widow Van Alstyne, who felt contempt for anyone who happened to be very poor. There were plenty of others, like Teunis for instance, who knew better.

You may think it odd that the story of this raid in Guilderland should have been preserved

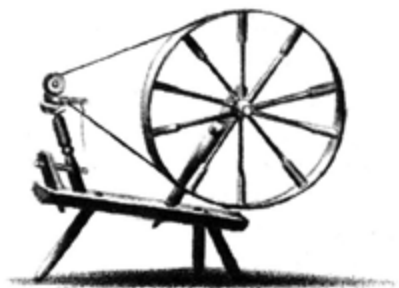
down to the present day because of plump Trudy, and not through anything Edward ever did. Trudy became known as the greatest and best spinster in the Helderbergs. Even after she married and became Trudy Hogle she was still known as the best spinster. A spinster is someone who spins. Because her mother's shoulder was crippled by the Indian's tomahawk, Trudy was taught to spin at the age of six, and was soon good enough to do all the spinning for her family. She became so unusually good, and her spinning was so unusually fine, that her descendants told their children about Trudy Hogle from generation to generation, and that was how her great-great-great-grandson (whose name is Thomas R. Shepherd, and who lives in Iliion, New York) came to know about Trudy and about Edward and the Indians and the Spanish Gun.

It was not unusual to find Spanish guns in Holland, for the Spaniards had once invaded that country and believed they had conquered

it. That is something no one should believe, for the Dutch are never good at staying beaten. In fact when you say, "Doesn't that beat the Dutch?" you mean, "Isn't that just about incredible?"

As a matter of fact, the Palatine Germans had a bit of the same peculiarity, and so did the Pilgrims, and the Scotch-Irish, and the English, whether they caught it from the Dutch, who have always suffered from the complaint, or whether it is born in every man and woman who wants to be free, to think as he chooses, and to live as he likes, and who means to do so, too.

Walter D. Edmonds



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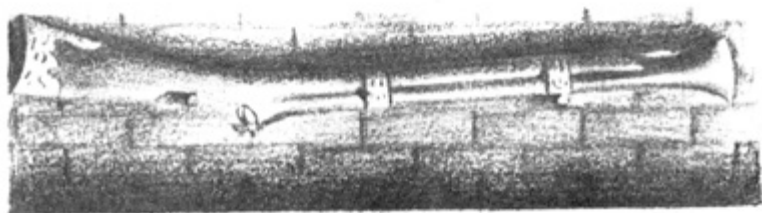
I: THE SPANISH GUN

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EDWARD watched intently as his father struggled into the blue uniform coat that he had had made when he was elected captain of the Guilderland militia. It was a fine thing, he thought, to have Captain Teunis Van Alstyne for one's father, but he did wish that some day, just once even, his father would take the Spanish Gun to the muster.

It hung over the fireplace, its bell mouth pointing towards the front of the house, its brass-heeled stock towards the shed door. It was longer than a grown man, half again the length of the musket kept on pegs over the stoop door, and more than twice the length of Edward, who was ten years old, with long legs, dark hair, like his mother's, and serious eyes.

Teunis Van Alstyne often said that he had seen culverins that did not look so big as this matchlock gun. He used to tease Gertrude, his wife, about it, asking whether she had brought the gun with her to kill Indians. They were a young couple to have a ten-year-old son; they were handsome and high-spirited; he, lusty and thick-set, a true Dutchman; she, showing her Palatine breeding, dark, brown-eyed, with black hair braided round her head, her slim body limber and quick about her work. They had been nineteen and sixteen when they married; and she hated it when Teunis put on the militia coat.



All summer he had been going off on military service, into the hills and down to Albany; and every time, to Edward's disappointment, he took the musket.

This time, before Teunis could reach for it, Edward asked, "Aren't you ever going to take the big gun, Father?"

Teunis swung round to his son, looking down into the thin serious dark face. "Look, Edward, I'll show you." He lifted the long gun down. It was so heavy that a man could hardly hold it. As for Edward, when he tried, he could not keep both ends off the floor together.

Then, as though Van Aernam were not waiting outside impatiently in the gathering darkness, sitting his own horse and holding Teunis's mare, Teunis bent down to show the boy how the gun worked. "See, Edward (he pronounced the name *Ateoord* in the Dutch manner), it's a matchlock. It doesn't fire itself like the musket, with a flint. You have got to touch the priming with fire, like a



Even Father had never used the matchlock gun.

In 1756, New York State was still a British colony, and the French and the Indians were constant threats to Edward and his family. When his father was called away to watch for a raid from the north, only Edward was left to protect Mama and little Trudy. His father had shown him how to use the huge matchlock gun, an old Spanish gun that was twice as long as he was, but would Edward be able to handle it if trouble actually came?

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