

**Stephen Leacock**

**BORROWING A MATCH**

You might think that borrowing a match upon the street is a simple thing. But any man who has ever tried it will assure you that it is not, and will be prepared to swear to the truth of my experience of the other evening.

I was standing on the corner of the street with a cigar that I wanted to light. I had no match. I waited till a decent, ordinary-looking man came along. Then I said:

“Excuse me, sir, but could you oblige me with the loan of a match?”

“A match?” he said, “why certainly.” Then he unbuttoned his overcoat and put his hand in the pocket of his waistcoat. “I know I have one,” he went on, “and I'd almost swear it's in the bottom pocket—or, hold on, though, I guess it may be in the top—just wait till I put these parcels down on the sidewalk.”

“Oh, don't trouble,” I said, “it's really of no consequence.”

“Oh, it's no trouble, I'll have it in a minute; I know there must be one in here somewhere”—he was digging his fingers into his pockets as he spoke—“but you see this isn't the waistcoat I generally...”

I saw that the man was getting excited about it. “Well, never mind,” I protested; “if that isn't the waistcoat that you generally—why, it doesn't matter.”

“Hold on, now, hold on!” the man said, “I've got one of the cursed things in here somewhere. I guess it must be in with my watch. No, it's not there either. Wait till I try my coat. If that confounded tailor only knew enough to make a pocket so that a man could get at it!”

He was getting pretty well worked up now. He had thrown down his walking-stick and was plunging at his pockets with his teeth set. “It's that cursed young boy of mine,” he hissed; “this comes of his fooling in my pockets. By Gad! perhaps I won't warm him up when I get home. Say, I'll bet that it's in my hip-pocket. You just hold up the tail of my overcoat a second till I...”

“No, no,” I protested again, “please don't take all this trouble, it really doesn't matter. I'm sure you needn't take off your overcoat, and oh, pray don't throw away your letters and things in the snow like that, and tear out your pockets by the roots! Please, please don't trample over your overcoat and put your feet through the parcels. I do hate to hear you swearing at your little boy, with that peculiar whine in your voice. Don't—please don't tear your clothes so savagely.”

Suddenly the man gave a grunt of exultation, and drew his hand up from inside the lining of his coat.

“I've got it,” he cried. “Here you are!” Then he brought it out under the light.

It was a toothpick.

Yielding to the impulse of the moment I pushed him under the wheels of a trolley-car, and ran.