“That,” he said, and pointed to the Magic Bottle.
“If you had that?” I inquired, at which he looked up at me with a sudden radiance.
“I could show it to Jessie,” he said, thoughtful as ever of others.
“It’s less than a hundred days to your birthday, Gibbles,” I said, and laid my hand on the door-handle.
Gip made no answer, but his grip tightened on my finger, and so we came into the shop.
It was no common shop this; it was a magic shop.
It was a little, narrow shop, not very well lit, and the door-bell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us. For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us. There was a tiger in papier-mache on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner; there were several crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fish-bowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic hat that shamelessly displayed its springs. On the floor were magic mirrors; one to draw you out long
and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat; and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in.

At any rate, there he was behind the counter—a curious, sallow\(^5\), dark man, with one ear larger than the other and a chin like the toe-cap of a boot.

“What can we have the pleasure?” he said, spreading his long, magic fingers on the glass case; and so with a start we were aware of him.

“I want,” I said, “to buy my little boy a few simple tricks.”

“Legerdemain\(^6\)?” he asked. “Mechanical? Domestic?”

“Anything amusing?” said I.

“Um!” said the shopman, and scratched his head for a moment as if thinking. Then, quite distinctly, he drew from his head a glass ball. “Something in this way?” he said, and held it out.

The action was unexpected. I had seen the trick done at entertainments endless times before—it’s part of the common stock of conjurers—but I had not expected it here.

“That’s good,” I said, with a laugh.

“Isn’t it?” said the shopman.

Gip stretched out his hand to take this object and found merely a blank palm.

“It’s in your pocket,” said the shopman, and there it was! “How much will that be?” I asked.

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\(^5\) sallow: yellowish or pale brown color

\(^6\) Legerdemain: light of hand

“The Magic Shop,” by Herbert George Wells, 1903
“We make no charge for glass balls,” said the shopman politely. “We get them,”—he picked one out of his elbow as he spoke—“free.” He produced another from the back of his neck, and laid it beside its predecessor on the counter. Gip regarded his glass ball sagely, then directed a look of inquiry at the two on the counter, and finally brought his round-eyed scrutiny to the shopman, who smiled.

“You may have those too,” said the shopman, “and, if you don’t mind, one from my mouth. So!”