He hailed a sleepy cabman and offered him an exorbitant bribe to get to Tremont Street in an impossible space of time. He sank down on the cheap cushions of the cab and felt helplessly in his pocket for a comforting friend. But though he puffed vigorously at the cigarette the thought still kept surging through his brain:— he had been cheated—he, MacGregor the invincible! Wait till—

The cabman pulled in his horse with a jerk. MacGregor tumbled out of the cab, threw the man a bill, and, in too much of a hurry for the waiting elevator, dashed up the stairs. To his breathless demand for Mr. Marvin, the boy answered uninterestingly: "He's out, sir; won't be in for two hours."

There was nothing to be gained by kicking the boy downstairs. And young Benedick MacGregor sank into a comfortable chair by the open window and looked down on the hot street. The Common was a mass of motionless green. Above the trees the dazzling gilt of the State House dome winked and blazed under the blue vault of the sky. Far below him, people lingered on the Long Walk, loath to leave the cool, shadow-flecked path for the white glare and the push of the street. The ceaseless roar of the traffic below, muffled by the intervening distance, came to his unheeding ears.

The office was very still. The scrape of the elevator or the click of its iron doors now and then echoed through the hollow halls, or the heels of an occasional plodder rang out in regular vibrations from the stairways. The chance opening of the office door brought with it a faint odor of ether—from the dentist's rooms across the hall. MacGregor dropped his head into his hands and tapped the floor impatiently with his heels. The hands on the dial of the Park Street church were procrastinating most shamefully, and MacGregor was not enjoying his own thoughts. They were not flattering to himself. And his wife's face kept appearing most inopportune before his eyes. "A woman never loses a chance to say, 'I told you so,'" he groaned.

When Mr. Marvin came in he glanced at MacGregor with a scarcely-suppressed twinkle; but he listened to his usually self-approving client with an immovable face.

"I suppose you realize, Mr. MacGregor," he said calmly when the young man had finished, "that you can in no way have the law against Mr. Barry for this?"

"Can't arrest a man for stealing my own house!" gasped MacGregor.

"No, certainly not. A man can have another arrested for stealing his watch, his dog, or even a loaf of bread, but he can in no way apprehend him for stealing his house. A house is the property of the person to whom the land on which it stands belongs. This lot belongs to Mr. Barry and therefore your house also is his. It in no way belongs to you. Mr. Barry, being a lawyer himself, knew this perfectly."

"And I thought he was 'stupid but honest,' damn him!" muttered MacGregor dejectedly.

Mr. Marvin still stared unperturbably out of the window. "Of course I will do everything in my power, Mr. MacGregor," he said. "I may be able to save your house yet."

"Thanks!" said the subdued reader of character humbly.

Mr. MacGregor greeted his wife in a half-hearted way that afternoon. One not knowing them might have thought he was afraid of her. But he realized that the trial must be gone through. Striding to the window he turned his back to his wife and blurted out:

"Well, you might as well say 'I told you so' now. You will when I've finished, and it's always pleasant to get disagreeables over with." And without waiting for her reply, he hastened through the story, not sparing himself a single anathema in his whole vocabulary.

Mr. MacGregor's back was towards her and Mrs. MacGregor could not resist the temptation to smile. There is something very gratifying even in a mental "I told you so."

"I knew all about this, Ben," she said quietly.

"You knew all about —! Then why the —?"

"Listen, please. You were so certain of Mr. Barry's honesty" (MacGregor winced) "that I didn't like to trouble you any further with my own foolish qualms. So when we came away, I wrote to Mr. Marvin and asked him to keep an eye on Mr. Barry, and if anything turned up not to bother you about it, but to let me know. He was out west at the time and was detained, so that he didn't get my letter or have a chance to act on it until a few weeks ago. When he did he found the house just as it is now—"