

The House That John Built

John Smith was a loyal carpenter, working for a very successful building contractor who called him into his office one day and said, “John, I’m putting you in charge of the next house we build. I want you to order all the materials and oversee the whole job from the ground up.”

John accepted the assignment with great enthusiasm and excitement. For 10 days before ground was broken at the building site, John studied the blueprints. He checked every measurement, every specification.

Suddenly, he had a thought. “If I am really in charge,” he said to himself, “why couldn’t I cut a few corners, use less expensive materials, and put the extra money in my pocket? Who would know the difference? Once the house is painted, it will look just great.”

So John set about his scheme. He ordered second-grade lumber, but his reports indicated that it was top-grade. He ordered inexpensive concrete for the foundation, put in cheap wiring, and cut every corner he could, yet he reported the purchase of much better materials.

When the home was completed and fully painted, he asked the contractor – his boss – to come and see it.



“John,” said the contractor, “what a magnificent job you have done! You have been such a good and faithful carpenter all these years that I have decided to show my gratitude by giving you this house you have built as a gift.”

What a case for underscoring the value of honesty, which is defined as moral uprightness – the quality, condition or characteristic of being fair, truthful and honorable.

Or, as we say in the South, this is an excellent example of “the chickens coming home to roost.”

There is a price to pay for lying or cheating, and sooner or later, the bill presents itself.

– Beecher Hunter