

8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Abilities

**“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness.”**

*Bible, James 1:12*

William St Julien Arabin was an English lawyer and judge who served as a judge in the Central Criminal Court in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whatever his abilities in law, Judge Arabin was known as an eccentric figure renowned for his confused pronouncements and strange epithets – intended or not. He once said of the citizens of Uxbridge in London:

*They will steal the very teeth out of your mouth as you walk through the streets.  
I know it from experience.*

But the quote I feel is worthy of some reflection and not mockery is this:

*Prisoner, God has given you good abilities,  
instead of which you go about the country stealing ducks.*

Whatever our belief systems – and in this case it matters little whether you put the “God” label on it or not – we all have good abilities, useful talents and precious gifts.

When I was in Primary School, the School Inspector came to visit our P7 class. In those days, the seating arrangement in the class was adjusted every week, depending on how well we’d done in tests for sums, spelling and scripture. The same few people were at the “top of the class” and the same few always at the bottom – in the desks by the draughty door.

After the Inspector had taken us through a series of questions, he asked us to sing, and we duly obliged with a familiar Scottish Song. He then asked for a soloist and chose the girl who was “bottom of the class” that week. *We* were all surprised. No one thought much of this child, far less believing she could sing. But the Inspector had obviously picked up something we’d never heard, and, of course, the girl sang beautifully.

I hope she continued as a singer as she got older and that her “good abilities” were made use of in one way or another. What a shame it would be if she wasted her gifts by joining the people of Uxbridge purloining people’s teeth or ended up appearing before Judge Arabin for doing nothing better than going about the country stealing ducks!

### **A prayer for today**

*Abilities? I’m thankful for these. Help me to make sure they’re well used. Amen.*