

29<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## Injustice

**“In the little world in which children have their existence ... there is nothing so finely perceived, and so finely felt, as injustice.”**

*Charles Dickens, Great Expectations*

Injustice, “so finely perceived and so finely felt”, should not be confined to the “little world in which children have their existence”, but must be a focus for every civilised society and every rational individual within it.

Oscar Joseph Slater was a victim of a miscarriage of justice in 1909, and was sentenced to death for the murder of an elderly spinster in Glasgow, though the sentence was commuted to hard labour for life. It was twenty years before he was freed, the efforts of many journalists, lawyers and writers – including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – ensuring that justice prevailed. After nineteen years in prison, Slater’s conviction was quashed on appeal in 1928. He married, and lived out his life in Ayr where he repaired and sold antiques. He died aged 76.

Some injustices have the weight of important people and public opinion behind them to put them right. But many remain uncovered, unchallenged or unpopular. It’s not for me to list such injustices, for the catalogue would be a long one indeed. But it is for *all* of us to highlight injustice when we find it, to put our weight behind righting such wrongs, and to encourage those in positions of authority to use their influence to ensure justice prevails. The prophet Amos (5:24), railing against the hypocrisy and double standards of his religious and civic society, said:

*Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream.*

If hypocrisy and double-standards are found to be damaging to the least of our society, let us face that injustice. If more Oscar Slaters are languishing in their own kind of imprisonment because of the injustices that have fallen on them, do they not have the right to be set free?

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, your Son called us to focus on justice, righteousness and love, and to care for the poor and downtrodden. Help us to heed that call, wherever we are and whatever injustices we uncover. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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