

the power to provide regulations for the trial of cases of petit larceny without indictment by the grand jury. These courts were established in 1875, with civil jurisdiction in cases involving an amount not exceeding one hundred dollars. A few years later they were given criminal jurisdiction in cases of larceny where the amount involved does not exceed twenty dollars. But this does not change the legal rule making felony the lowest crime that will forfeit the right of suffrage, in the least, and for the reason that a felony is punishable by confinement in the penitentiary of the State, and justices of the peace cannot sentence persons convicted of petit larcenies to any such confinement; their highest punishment under the law being imprisonment in the county jail for not longer than three months. Hence this establishes the fact beyond question, that the petit larceny which by law comes within the trial jurisdiction of justices of the peace is not felony under the constitution and laws of this State; nor can it be made so except by a change in the law defining a felony, or by constitutional amendment, and therefore no citizen that is convicted of petit larceny by justices of the peace can be legally prohibited from voting, the same as any other citizen in the State of Florida.

The construction placed by the officers of the law upon the statute giving justices of the peace trial jurisdiction in cases of petit larceny, whereby it is held that persons convicted by them for such offenses are disqualified for the right of suffrage, and which has been allowed to go uncorrected by the government, is unjust, illegal, and pernicious. These courts convict persons on unfair and trumped-up charges, and are thus made engines of public mischief. This comes within the meaning of a public grievance to the extent that it is a failure of the government to redress a public wrong that results from the illegal practices of the officers of the law, who are amenable to the State for the proper discharge of their public duties.

We should take steps to secure the passage of a law by the next legislature, setting forth the proper construction that should be placed upon that statute, showing that under the constitution and laws of Florida no person convicted of petit larceny by justices of the peace can be prohibited from voting.

The laws of this State provide that every registered voter shall be liable to be drawn for jury service, and since we form an important part of the registered voters, there is no reason why we should be persistently passed by and discrimi-