

The Pittsburgh Gazette

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1867.

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THE AMNESTY

The word amnesty is derived from the Greek word amnestia, which, literally, signifies forgetting or oblivion.

This word is not used by the Greek writers; but the thing intended by it is expressed under other verbal forms.

The word is used by Plutarch and Herodotus. A passage in Cicero implies that he had, in his mind, the idea, without using the word.

The notion of an amnesty among the Greeks was a declaration of the person or persons who had nearly acquired or recovered the sovereign power, by which they performed all the duties of a government, or obliged the government to support a declaration of amnesty. Some times a declaration of this kind was absolute or universal; at other times certain persons specifically named were excepted, or particular classes of persons generally described.

Thus, in Athens, when Pericles had recovered the oil garchy of the Thirty Tyrants, and had restored the democratical form of government, an amnesty of the persons who had been guilty of political offenses was declared, from the operation of which the Thirty themselves, and some persons who had been named in a secret list, were excluded.

When Bonaparte returned from Egypt, he excluded thirteen persons, whom he named in a decree published by him at Lyons.

Upon the restoration of CHARLES II. of England, an amnesty was passed by which the persons actually concerned in the execution of his father were excluded from the benefit of pardon. Both King and Parliament concurred in this amnesty. Here is an instance in which a class of persons were excepted by a general declaration and not named.

Of this nature was the law passed by the French Chambers in 1816, upon the return of CHARLES X. to the throne, after the battle of Waterloo, which offered a complete amnesty to all persons who had either directly or indirectly taken part in the rebellion and usurpation of Napoleon Bonaparte, with the exception of certain persons whose names had been previously mentioned in a royal ordinance, as the most active partisans of the usurper. It was objected to this French law of amnesty, that it did not point out with sufficient perspicuity the individuals who were to be excepted from its operation. Instead of naming specific offenders, it excepted whole classes of persons, by which a certain degree of uncertainty and confusion was occasioned, which much retarded the peaceable settlement of the nation, the consequence of which was, that it did not point out with sufficient perspicuity the individuals who were to be excepted from its operation. Instead of naming specific offenders, it excepted whole classes of persons, by which a certain degree of uncertainty and confusion was occasioned, which much retarded the peaceable settlement of the nation, the consequence of which was, that it did not point out with sufficient perspicuity the individuals who were to be excepted from its operation.

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