**IN THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF SWEETHEARTS…**

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One hundred years ago there were no such delights of modern life as the Internet, cell phones and television. Moreover, only a big city or a capital could take pride in such public establishments as the theatre, the philharmonic or the athenaeum. What was Kherson like in those times?

Travellers who visited Kherson en route in the XIX century invariably marked in their notes that moody city life here was enlivened only in the afternoon – on Sundays or on holy days. Therefore, any entertaining occasion such as a brass band show or a ball held by any city fellowship was a big event in the dull city life and always drew attention.

Usually, Kherson public balls were held in the Community Hall or in the City Public Meeting. Fancy-dress balls which gave an opportunity to hide one’s face under a mask and to feel more assured and relaxed were especially popular with the inhabitants of Kherson in the days of strict manners. Money for such occasions was raised by spreading lottery tickets. Thus, the instant lottery popular in those times was the necessary part of all the balls. Takings from selling tickets and fund-raising from charity actions performed during such events were given to support the poor. From time to time the city newspapers noted in the invitations to the entertainment parties: *“To support the voluntary sanitary squad which is going to the Far East”* or *“To support the affected by the drought”* or *“There will be a private ball accompanied by a private orchestra. The ball begins at 7 p.m., ends at 2 a.m. Entrance fee is 50 copecks for a chevalier who can also invite one lady for free”.* So, all the entertaining public events in the city were bringing double advantages: on the one hand, there was communication and entertainment; on the other hand – an important help for those who needed it.

In addition to dances, city balls also included different shows such as concerts, competitions, lotteries, pageants, amateur plays. Usually, the ball season started at the beginning of December and lasted till the Lent. *“On the sixth of December at the City Recreation Centre the first ball took place. The presence of a lot of officers especially brightened the ball,”* local newspapers greeted the opening of a season. During the rest of the year such events were held on special occasions.

**Based on:**

***Хмель В.А. Херсонские истории, предания и были. - Херсон: Наддніпряночка, 2014.***

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