***KHERSON’S SPECIAL SUN-DIAL TIME***

***Cultural Reader***

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***CHOOSING ONE’S DEEDS***

There is a monument in the centre of Kherson in the form of a huge sun-dial which is almost as old as the city itself. The monument is to the great British philanthropist John Howard[[1]](#footnote-1)\*, the public man and the prison reformer who died in Kherson and was buried here.

In the sunny Southern-Ukrainian city the memory of the great man who managed to save a lot of lives all over the world rising against the cruel prison system left a warm trace in people’s hearts. Mr. Howard said, ‘We can never choose circumstances but we can always choose deeds’. In fact, it is not as easy as it may seem and we often need support and a good example.

John Howard was born in England in 1726. In his mature years he was never to be caught idle: he worked hard to educate himself as an amateur physician because the whole world was stamped in terrible epidemics that indiscriminately devoured human lives. He decided to challenge death itself: to take a far journey all through Russia and then to Egypt where plague was supposed to come from.

John Howard visited patients in military hospitals and prisons where he fought for people’s destinies despite their social status. Some of them had made a lot of mistakes, some were hated by society but he believed that anyone deserved to live.

Kherson was on his way to Egypt. The city also had a prison to inspect. John Howard met with the local elite. Here he found many people willing to give him a friendly support and invaluable help in his difficult mission.

The tragedy broke out on one dark winter night when he received the alarming news: his patient caught typhoid and was between life and death. John Howard reacted immediately. It being too late and not a single cab out, the doctor had to rush through the snowstorm riding. An icy wind was piercing right through him, the doctor had a hard time finding his patient's house…

He managed to save the woman but he had to pay the highest price – one life in exchange for the other.

In his last notes Mr. Howard wrote he didn’t care where to spend his eternity: it was equally close to the sky – anywhere.

John Howard continues to do his great duty posthumously: the huge stone sun-dial on his grave tells the unique local sun time to the city dwellers, and it ever reminds us about the importance of self-sacrifice for the great purpose which changes everyone’s circumstances.

1. \* [` dƷon `hauəd] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)