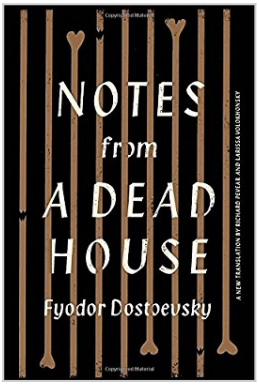

Notes from a Dead House

By Fyodor Dostoevsky

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky

From the acclaimed translators Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky comes a new translation of the first great prison memoir: Fyodor Dostoevsky's fictionalized account of his life-changing penal servitude in Siberia.

In 1849 Dostoevsky was sentenced to four years at hard labor in a Siberian prison camp for his participation in a utopian socialist discussion group. The account he wrote after his release, based on notes he smuggled out, was the first book to reveal life inside the Russian penal system. The book not only brought him fame but also founded the tradition of Russian prison writing.

Notes from a Dead House (sometimes translated as *The House of the Dead*) is filled with vivid details of brutal punishments, shocking conditions, feuds and betrayals, and the psychological effects of the loss of freedom, but it also describes moments of comedy and acts of kindness. There are grotesque bathhouse and hospital scenes that seem to have come straight from Dante's *Inferno*, alongside daring escape attempts, doomed acts of defiance, and a theatrical Christmas celebration that draws the entire community together in a temporary suspension of their grim reality.

To get past government censors, Dostoevsky made his narrator a common-law criminal rather than a political prisoner, but the perspective is unmistakably his own. His incarceration was a transformative experience that nourished all his later works, particularly *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky's narrator discovers that even among the most debased criminals there are strong and beautiful souls. His story reveals the prison as a tragedy both for the inmates and for Russia; it is, finally, a profound meditation on freedom: "The prisoner himself knows that he is a prisoner; but no brands, no fetters will make him forget that he is a human being."

Notes from a Dead House

By Fyodor Dostoevsky

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky

From the acclaimed translators Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky comes a new translation of the first great prison memoir: Fyodor Dostoevsky's fictionalized account of his life-changing penal servitude in Siberia.

In 1849 Dostoevsky was sentenced to four years at hard labor in a Siberian prison camp for his participation in a utopian socialist discussion group. The account he wrote after his release, based on notes he smuggled out, was the first book to reveal life inside the Russian penal system. The book not only brought him fame but also founded the tradition of Russian prison writing.

Notes from a Dead House (sometimes translated as *The House of the Dead*) is filled with vivid details of brutal punishments, shocking conditions, feuds and betrayals, and the psychological effects of the loss of freedom, but it also describes moments of comedy and acts of kindness. There are grotesque bathhouse and hospital scenes that seem to have come straight from Dante's *Inferno*, alongside daring escape attempts, doomed acts of defiance, and a theatrical Christmas celebration that draws the entire community together in a temporary suspension of their grim reality.

To get past government censors, Dostoevsky made his narrator a common-law criminal rather than a political prisoner, but the perspective is unmistakably his own. His incarceration was a transformative experience that nourished all his later works, particularly *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky's narrator discovers that even among the most debased criminals there are strong and beautiful souls. His story reveals the prison as a tragedy both for the inmates and for Russia; it is, finally, a profound meditation on freedom: "The prisoner himself knows that he is a prisoner; but no brands, no fetters will make him forget that he is a human being."

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #97829 in Books
- Published on: 2015-03-24
- Released on: 2015-03-24
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.51" h x 1.23" w x 6.57" l, 1.52 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

Editorial Review

Review
"Excellent. . . . Dostoevsky's constant preoccupation is the meaning of human freedom and the prisoners' preservation of their dignity." —*Harper's Magazine*

"A priceless addition to the literature of the penal experience. . . . A master of psychological portraiture. . . . A testament to the power of the human will, the way it can marshal patience and imagination and hope against the most nightmarish assaults on human dignity." —*The New Criterion*

"One of the most harrowingly universal books Dostoevsky ever wrote. . . . It's cause for no small celebration that the extraordinary series of translations by Pevear and Volokhonsky has now seized on Notes from The House of the Dead." —*The Buffalo News*

"The appearance of any new translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky is always an event in a literary season. . . . [A] powerful new translation." —*Open Letters Monthly*

"One of literature's definitive prison memoirs. . . . A classic made current and a welcome addition to the library of Russian literature in translation." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Dostoevsky unflinchingly describes the dehumanization of prison, such as the way fetters were not even lifted from the dying, but also conveys how the flame of humanity survives even under such conditions, allowing cleverness and compassion to endure. This new translation is eminently readable." —*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author
Together, **RICHARD PEVEAR** and **LARISSA VOLOKHONSKY** have translated works by Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Gogol, Bulgakov, and Pasternak. They were twice awarded the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize (for their versions of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*), and their translation of Dostoevsky's *Demons* was one of three nominees for the same prize. They are married and live in France.

i

The Dead House

Our prison stood at the edge of the fortress, right by the fortress rampart. You could look at God's world through the chinks in the fence: wouldn't you see at least something? But all you could see was a strip of sky and a high earthen rampart overgrown with weeds, and on the wall sentries pacing up and down day and night, and right then you would think that years would go by, and you would come in the same way to look through the chinks in the fence and see the same rampart, the same sentries, and the same little strip of sky, not the sky over the prison, but a different, far-off, free sky. Picture to yourself a large yard, some two

hundred paces long and a hundred and fifty wide, surrounded on all sides, in the form of an irregular hexagon, by a high stockade, that is, a fence of high posts (palings) dug deeply into the ground, their ribs pressed firmly against each other, fastened together by crosswise planks, and sharpened at the tips: this was the outer wall of the prison. On one side of the wall sturdy gates had been set in, always locked, always guarded day and night by sentries; they were opened on demand to let people out to work. Beyond those gates was the bright, free world; people lived like everybody else. But on this side of the wall, you pictured that world as some sort of impossible fairy tale. Here you were in a special world, unlike anything else; it had its own special laws, its own clothing, its own morals and customs, an alive dead house, a life like nowhere else, and special people. It is this special corner that I am setting out to describe.

Once inside the wall, you see several buildings. On both sides of the wide inner yard stretch two long, one-story log houses. These are the barracks. Here the prisoners live, sorted by categories. Then, deeper into the enclosure, there is another similar house: this is the kitchen, divided into two sections; further on there is another building where there are cellars, barns, and sheds, all under the same roof. The middle of the yard is empty and forms a rather large, level space. Here the prisoners line up for head count and roll call morning, noon, and evening, and occasionally several more times a day—depending on the suspiciousness of the sentries and their ability to count quickly. Round about, between the buildings and the fence, there is still quite a lot of space. There, behind the buildings, some inmates of a more unsociable and gloomy character like to walk in their off-hours, shielded from all eyes, and think their own thoughts. Meeting them during these strolls, I liked to peer into their sullen, branded faces, trying to guess what they were thinking about. There was one prisoner whose favorite occupation during his free time was counting the posts. There were about fifteen hundred of them, and he had them all counted up and marked off; each post signified a day for him; each day he counted off one post and in that way, by the number of posts left uncounted, he could actually see how many days of prison he had left before his term was served. He was sincerely glad when he finished some one side of the hexagon. He still had many years to wait; but in prison there was time enough to learn patience. I once saw a prisoner taking leave of his comrades before being released after twenty years in prison. There were people who remembered him entering the prison for the first time, young, carefree, mindful neither of his crime nor of his punishment. He was leaving a gray-haired old man with a sad and gloomy face. He went silently around our six barracks. On entering each barrack, he recited a prayer before the icons, then made a low bow to his comrades, asking them not to remember evil against him.1 I also remember how one prisoner, formerly a well-to-do Siberian peasant, was called to the gates once towards evening. Six months earlier he had received news that his former wife had remarried, and he had been deeply saddened. Now she herself came to the prison, sent for him, and gave him alms. They talked for about two minutes, wept a little, and said good-bye forever. I saw his face when he came back to the barrack .?.?. Yes, you could learn patience in that place.

When darkness fell, we were all brought to the barracks, where we were locked in for the night. I always found it hard to go back to our barrack from outside. It was a long, low, and stuffy room, dimly lit by tallow candles, with a heavy, stifling smell. I don’t understand now how I survived for ten years in it. Three planks on the bunk: that was all my space. Some thirty men shared the same bunk in our room alone. In winter they locked up early; it was a good four hours before everybody fell asleep. Meanwhile—noise, din, guffawing, swearing, the clank of chains, fumes and soot, shaven heads, branded faces, ragged clothes, everything abused, besmeared .?.?. yes, man survives it all! Man is a creature who gets used to everything, and that, I think, is the best definition of him.

Altogether there were about two hundred and fifty of us in the prison—a nearly constant figure. Some came, others finished their terms and left, still others died. And they were all kinds! I think each province, each region of Russia had its representatives here. There were non-Russians, there were even exiles from the Caucasian mountaineers. All this was sorted out according to the severity of the crime and, consequently, to the number of years they were condemned to serve. It must be supposed that there was no crime that did not have its representative here. The main core of all the prison populace consisted of deported convicts of the civilian category (*departed* convicts, as they naïvely mispronounced it). These were criminals totally deprived of all civil rights, cut-off slices of society, their faces branded in eternal witness to their outcast state. They were sent to hard labor for terms of eight to twelve years and then distributed around various Siberian districts as settlers. There were also criminals of the military category, who were not deprived of civil rights, as is generally the case in penal companies of the Russian army. They were sent for short terms, at the end of which they went back where they came from to serve as soldiers in Siberian battalions of the line. Many of them returned to prison almost at once for repeated serious offenses, not for a short term now, but for twenty years. This category was called “perpetual.” But the “perpetuals” were still not totally deprived of civil rights. Finally, there was yet another special category of the most terrible criminals, a rather numerous one, mainly from the military. It was called the “special section.” Criminals were sent to it from all over Russia. They themselves considered that they were lifers and did not know their term at hard labor. According to the law, their tasks were to be doubled and tripled. They were kept in prison until the heaviest hard-labor sites were opened in Siberia. “You’re in for a term, but we’re in for the long haul,” they used to say to other inmates. Later I heard that this category had been abolished. Besides that, the civilian order has also been abolished in our fortress, and a single military-prisoner company has been set up. Naturally, along with that the superiors have also been changed. In other words, I am describing old times, things long past and gone .?.?.

This was long ago now; I see it all as if in a dream. I remember how I entered the prison. It was on an evening in the month of December. Darkness was already falling; people were coming back from work; they were preparing for the roll call. A mustached sergeant finally opened the door for me to this strange house, in which I was to spend so many years, to endure so many sensations, of which, if I had not experienced them in reality, I could never have had even the vaguest notion. For example, could I ever have imagined how terrible and tormenting it would be that, in all the ten years of my term, not once, not for a single minute, would I be alone??.?.?. At work always under guard, at home with my two hundred comrades, and never once, never once alone!?.?.?. However, that was not all I had to get used to!

Here there were chance murderers and professional murderers, robbers and gang leaders. There were petty thieves, and tramps who lived by holdups or by breaking and entering. There were those about whom it was hard to decide what could have brought them there. And yet each of them had his own story, hazy and oppressive, like the fumes in your head after last night’s drunkenness. Generally, they spoke little of the past, did not like to tell and clearly tried not to think about what had been. I even knew murderers among them so cheerful, so never-thoughtful, that you could wager their conscience had never reproached them at all. But there were also the gloomy ones, who were almost always silent. Generally, it was rare that anyone told about his life, and curiosity was not in fashion, was somehow not the custom, was not acceptable. Though on rare occasions someone would start talking out of idleness, and another man would listen coolly and gloomily. No one could surprise anyone here. “We’re literate folk!” they often said, with some strange self-satisfaction. I remember how a drunken robber (you could occasionally get drunk in prison) once began telling about how he killed a five-year-old boy, how he lured him first with a toy, took him to some empty shed, and there put a knife in him. The whole barrack, which until then had laughed at his jokes, cried out

like one man, and the robber was forced to shut up; they did not cry out in indignation, but just so, because he *shouldn't* have talked *about that;* because it was not acceptable to talk *about that.* I will note by the way that these people were indeed literate and that not in a figurative but in the literal sense. Certainly more than half of them could read and write. In what other place where Russian folk gather in large numbers could you find a group of two hundred and fifty people more than half of whom were literate? As I heard later, someone concluded from similar data that literacy ruins the people. That is a mistake: the causes here are quite different, though it is impossible not to agree that literacy develops self-assurance in people. But that is by no means a shortcoming. The categories were distinguished by their clothing: some had jackets half dark brown and half gray, and their trousers as well—one leg gray, the other dark brown. At work once, a girl who sold rolls came up to the prisoners, studied me for a long time, and then suddenly burst out laughing. "Pah, what a sight!" she cried. "Not enough gray cloth, and not enough black!" There were some whose jackets were all of gray cloth, and only the sleeves were dark brown. Our heads were also shaved differently: some had half the head shaved lengthwise, and others crosswise.

At first glance you could notice a rather strong similarity in this strange family; even the most distinct, most original personalities, who reigned over the others involuntarily, tried to fall into the general tone of the whole prison. In general I must say that all these people, with the exception of a few inexhaustibly cheerful ones, who were held up to universal scorn because of it, were gloomy, envious, terribly vain, boastful, touchy, and formalists in the highest degree. The ability to be surprised at nothing was considered the greatest virtue. They were all mad about keeping up appearances. But not infrequently the most arrogant look changed with lightning speed to the most pusillanimous. There were several truly strong men; they were simple and unaffected. But, strangely enough, among these truly strong men there were a few who were vain to the utmost degree, almost to the point of sickness. In general, vanity and appearances took the foreground. The majority were depraved and terribly degenerate. There was ceaseless gossip and scandal-mongering: it was hell, pitch-darkness. Yet no one dared to rebel against the internal statutes and accepted customs of the prison; everyone submitted. There were outstanding characters who submitted with difficulty, with effort, but submitted all the same. Such men came to the prison as had gone all too far, who had leaped beyond all measure in freedom, so that in the end they committed their crimes as if not of themselves, as if not knowing why, as if in delirium, in a daze; often out of a vanity chafed in the highest degree. But with us they were reined in at once, though some of them had been the terror of whole villages and towns before coming to prison. As he looked around, the newcomer would soon realize that he had landed in another place, that here there was nobody to surprise, and he would humble himself imperceptibly and fall in with the general tone. Outwardly, this general tone consisted of a sort of special personal dignity that pervaded almost every inhabitant of the prison. As if the title of convict, of condemned man, constituted some sort of rank, and an honorable one at that. No signs of shame and repentance! However, there was also a sort of outward, so to speak, official humility, a sort of calm philosophizing: "We're lost folk," they would say. "You didn't know how to live in freedom, now stroll down the green street and inspect the ranks."2 "You didn't listen to your father and mother, now you can listen to the drumhead's leather." "You thought gold embroidery was no fun, now crush stones till your time is done." This was all oft repeated, both by way of admonition and as ordinary proverbs and sayings, but never seriously. It was all just words. Hardly a one of them acknowledged his lawlessness to himself. Let someone who was not from among the convicts try reproaching a prisoner for his crime and abusing him (though it's not in the Russian spirit to reproach a criminal)—there would be no end of cursing. And what masters at cursing they all were! Theirs was a refined, artistic cursing. They raised cursing to the level of a science; they tried to bring it off not so much by an insulting word as by an insulting meaning, spirit, idea—that was more subtle, more venomous. Incessant quarrels had developed this science still more among them. All these people worked under the lash, consequently they were idle, consequently they were depraved: if they were not depraved before, they became so at hard labor. They had not gathered here by their own will; they were all strangers to each other.

“The devil wore out three pair of boot soles before he got us heaped together!” they said of themselves; and therefore gossip, intrigue, old wives’ slander, envy, squabbles, and spite were always in the foreground of this hellish life. No old wife could be so much an old wife as some of these murderers. I repeat, there were strong men among them, characters who all their lives were accustomed to crushing and domineering, hardened, fearless. These men were somehow involuntarily respected; they, for their part, though often very jealous of their reputation, generally tried not to be a burden to anyone, did not get into empty quarrels, behaved with extraordinary dignity, were reasonable and almost always obedient with the authorities—not on principle, not out of a sense of duty, but just so, as if by some sort of contract, a sense of mutual advantage. However, they were also treated with caution. I remember how one of these prisoners, a fearless and resolute man, known to the authorities for his brutal inclinations, was summoned once to be punished for some offense. It was a summer day, during off-hours. The officer who was most immediately and directly in charge of the prison came in person to the guardhouse, located just by our gates, to be present at the punishment. This major was a sort of fatal being for the prisoners; he reduced them to trembling before him. He was insanely strict, he “hurled himself at people,” as the convicts used to say. What they feared most in him was his penetrating, lynx-like gaze, from which nothing could be concealed. He somehow saw without looking. When he entered the prison, he already knew what was going on at the other end. The prisoners called him “Eight-eyes.” His system was wrong. He only made the already embittered men more bitter by his furious, malicious acts, and if it had not been for the commandant over him, a noble and reasonable man, who occasionally tempered his savage escapades, his administration would have caused much harm. I do not understand how he could have ended happily; he retired alive and well, though he was, incidentally, brought to trial.

The prisoner turned pale when he was summoned. Usually he lay down silently and resolutely under the rods, silently endured the punishment, got up after the punishment all dishevelled, looking upon the misfortune that had befallen him with philosophic equanimity. They always treated him cautiously, however. But this time for some reason he considered himself in the right. He turned pale and, in secret from the convoy, managed to slip a sharp English cobbler’s knife into his sleeve. Knives and other sharp instruments were frightfully forbidden in prison. Searches were frequent, unexpected, and thorough; the punishments were harsh; but as it was difficult to find something when a thief decided to hide it, and as knives and tools were a permanent necessity in prison, there was never any lack of them, despite the searches. And if they were taken away, new ones immediately appeared. The whole prison rushed to the fence and looked with bated breath through the chinks in the paling. They all knew that this time Petrov would not lie down under the rods and that the major’s end had come. But at the most decisive moment, our major got into his droshky and drove away, entrusting the carrying out of the punishment to another officer. “God himself saved him!” the prisoners said afterwards. As for Petrov, he quite calmly endured the punishment. His wrath departed along with the major. A prisoner is obedient and submissive up to a certain point; but there is a limit that should not be overstepped. Incidentally, nothing could be more curious than these strange fits of impatience and rebelliousness. Often a man endures for several years, resigns himself, suffers the harshest punishments, and suddenly explodes over some small thing, a trifle, almost nothing. From one point of view, he could even be called mad; and so they do call him.

I have already said that in the course of several years I did not see the least sign of repentance among these people, nor the least heavy brooding on their crime, and that the majority of them inwardly considered themselves perfectly in the right. That is a fact. Of course, vanity, bad examples, swagger, false shame are

mostly responsible for that. On the other hand, who can say he has probed the depths of these lost hearts and read in them what is hidden from the whole world? Yet it should have been possible, in so many years, to notice, to catch, to grasp at least some feature in those hearts that would testify to inner anguish, to suffering. But there was no such thing, decidedly no such thing. No, crime, it seems, cannot be comprehended from given, ready-made points of view, and its philosophy is a bit more difficult than people suppose. Of course, prisons and the system of forced labor do not correct the criminal; they only punish him and ensure society against the evildoer's further attempts on its peace and quiet. In the criminal himself, prison and the most intense forced labor develop only hatred, a thirst for forbidden pleasures, and a terrible light-mindedness. But I am firmly convinced that the famous system of solitary confinement also achieves only a false, deceptive, external purpose. It sucks the living juice from a man, enervates his soul, weakens it, frightens it, and then presents this morally dried-up, half-crazed mummy as an example of correction and repentance. Of course, a criminal who has risen against society hates it, and almost always considers himself right and society wrong. Besides, he has already suffered its punishment, and he almost considers he has come out clean, has evened the score. Finally, from such points of view, one might reckon that the criminal himself ought to be all but vindicated. But, despite all possible points of view, everyone will agree that there are crimes which always and everywhere, by all possible laws, from the beginning of the world, have been considered indisputable crimes and will be considered so as long as man remains man. Only in prison did I hear stories of the most horrible, most unnatural deeds, the most monstrous murders, told with the most irrepressible, the most childishly merry laughter. The memory of one parricide in particular will not leave me. He was of the nobility, served in the government, and to his sixty-year-old father was something of a prodigal son. His behavior was completely wayward, and he ran deeply into debt. His father tried to curb him, to reason with him; but his father had a house, a farm, was suspected of having money, and—the son killed him, hungry for the inheritance. The crime was discovered only a month later. The murderer himself reported to the police that his father had disappeared no one knew where. He spent the whole month in the most depraved fashion. Finally, in his absence, the police found the body. A sewage ditch covered with boards ran the whole length of the courtyard. The body was lying in that ditch. It was dressed and neat, the gray head had been cut off and put back on the body, and the killer had placed a pillow under it. He did not confess; he was stripped of his nobility and rank, and sent to hard labor for twenty years. All the time I lived with him, he was in the merriest, the most excellent of spirits. He was a whimsical, light-minded, highly unreasonable man, though not at all stupid. I never noticed any particular cruelty in him. The prisoners despised him, not for his crime, which nobody ever mentioned, but for his foolishness, for not knowing how to behave. In conversation he occasionally remembered his father. Once, talking about the healthy constitution hereditary in his family, he added: "*My parent* now, he never complained of any illness, right up to his death." Such brutal insensitivity is, of course, impossible. It is phenomenal; there is some lack in the man's constitution here, some bodily and moral defect still unknown to science, and not merely a crime. Of course, I did not believe in that crime. But people from his town, who supposedly knew all the details of his story, told me the whole case. The facts were so clear, it was impossible not to believe them.

The prisoners heard him cry out once in his sleep at night: "Hold him, hold him! Cut his head off, his head, his head!?.?.?."

Almost all the prisoners talked and raved in their sleep. Curses, thieves' jargon, knives, axes most often came from their mouths when they raved. "We're beaten folk," they used to say, "we're all beaten up inside; that's why we shout in our sleep."

Government-imposed forced labor was a duty, not an occupation: the prisoner finished his assignment or served his allotted hours of work and went back to prison. The work was looked upon with hatred. Without his own special, personal occupation, to which he was committed with all his mind, with all his reckoning, a man could not live in prison. And how, then, could all these people, intelligent, having lived intensely and wishing to live, forcibly heaped together in this place, forcibly torn away from society and normal life, have a normal and regular life here, by their own will and inclination? From idleness alone, such criminal qualities would develop in a man here as he had no notion of before. Without work, and without lawful, normal property, a man cannot live, he becomes depraved, he turns into a brute. And therefore each person in prison, owing to natural need and some sense of self-preservation, had his own craft and occupation. The long summer days were almost entirely taken up with government work; in the short nights there was barely enough time for sleep. But in winter the prisoners, according to the rules, had to be locked up as soon as it got dark. What is there to do during the long, dull hours of a winter evening? And therefore almost every barrack, despite the prohibition, turned into an enormous workshop. Work itself, being occupied, was not forbidden; but it was strictly forbidden to have tools with you in prison, and without them work was impossible. But people worked on the quiet, and it seems the authorities, in some cases, did not look into it very closely. Many of the convicts came to the prison knowing nothing, but they learned from others and later went out into freedom as good craftsmen. There were bootmakers, and shoemakers, and tailors, and cabinetmakers, and locksmiths, and woodcarvers, and gilders. There was a Jew, Isai Bumstein, a jeweler, who was also a moneylender. They all worked and earned their two cents. Orders for work came from town. Money is minted freedom, and therefore, for a man completely deprived of freedom, it is ten times dearer. Just to have it jingling in his pocket half comforts him, even if he cannot spend it. But money can be spent always and everywhere, the more so as forbidden fruit is twice sweeter. And in prison you could even get hold of vodka. Pipes were strictly forbidden, but everybody smoked them. Money and tobacco saved them from scurvy and other diseases. Work saved them from crime: without work the prisoners would have devoured each other like spiders in a jar. In spite of which, both work and money were forbidden. Surprise searches were often carried out at night, everything forbidden was confiscated, and well hidden as the money was, it still sometimes ended up in the searchers' hands. That was partly why it was not saved, but quickly spent on drink; that was why vodka also found its way into the prison. After each search, the guilty ones, besides being deprived of all their property, would most often be painfully punished. But, after each search, the losses were quickly replenished, new things were obtained at once, and everything went on as before. The authorities knew that, and the prisoners did not murmur against the punishments, though such a life was like setting up house on Mount Vesuvius.

Those who had no craft went into other kinds of business. There were rather original ways. Some, for instance, went into secondhand dealing, and sometimes sold such things as it would never occur to people outside prison walls not only to buy and sell, but even to consider as things. But the prison was very poor and the trade was brisk. The least rag had value and was good for something. From poverty, money also acquired a totally different value in prison than outside it. A big and complicated piece of work was paid for in pennies. Some even made a success of moneylending. An indebted or bankrupt prisoner would take his last possessions to the moneylender, to get a few copper coins from him at frightful interest. If he did not redeem the things in time, they would be sold without delay and without mercy. Moneylending flourished so much that even government-issued things—government linens, footwear, things necessary to every prisoner at every moment—were accepted as pledges. But in the case of such pledges, matters could take a different, though not entirely unexpected, turn: the man who left the pledge and got the money would go at once, without another word, to the senior sergeant, the man immediately in charge of the prison, and report the pledging of government things, and they would at once be taken away from the moneylender, without even informing the higher authorities. Curiously enough, there was sometimes even no quarrel involved: the moneylender would silently and sullenly return what he had to, as if he had even expected it to turn out that

way. Maybe he could not help admitting to himself that in the pledger's place he would have done the same. And therefore, if he did curse afterwards, it was without any malice, just so, to clear his conscience.

Generally, they all stole terribly from each other. Almost everybody had his own chest with a lock for keeping government things. This was permitted; but the chests were no salvation. I suppose one can imagine what skillful thieves we had there. One prisoner, a man sincerely devoted to me (I say that without any exaggeration), stole my Bible, the only book we were allowed to have in prison. He confessed it to me the same day, not out of repentance, but out of pity for me, because I spent so long looking for it. There were people who sold vodka and quickly became rich. I will tell about that trade separately sometime; it is quite remarkable. There were many who wound up in prison for smuggling, and therefore it is no surprise that, despite the searches and guards, vodka was brought into the prison that way. Incidentally, smuggling is by nature a special sort of crime. Can you imagine, for instance, that for some smugglers money, profit, plays a secondary role, that it does not come foremost? And yet it is sometimes precisely so. A smuggler works by passion, by vocation. He is something of a poet. He risks all, faces terrible danger, dodges, invents, extricates himself; he sometimes even acts by a sort of inspiration. It is a passion as strong as card-playing. I knew a certain inmate in prison, externally of colossal dimensions, but so meek, quiet, humble, that it was impossible to imagine how he ended up in prison. He was so mild and easy to get along with that in all his time in prison he never quarreled with anybody. But he was from the western border, got put away for smuggling, and, naturally, could not help himself and started running vodka. So many times he was punished for it, and how afraid he was of the rod! And this running of vodka brought him a most negligible income. Only the entrepreneur got rich from it. The odd fellow loved art for art's sake. He was tearful as an old woman, and so many times, after being punished, he would promise and swear to give up smuggling. He would control himself manfully, sometimes for a whole month, but in the end he still could not keep away from it .?.?. Thanks to such persons, there was no lack of vodka in prison.

Finally, there was another source of income, which, while it did not make the prisoners rich, was constant and beneficial. This was almsgiving. The upper class of our society has no idea how merchants, tradesmen, and all our people care for the "unfortunate." The almsgiving is almost continuous, and almost always in the form of bread, rolls, and kalachi,3 far more seldom in money. Without these alms, in many places prisoners, especially those awaiting trial, who are kept much more strictly than those who have been sentenced, would have a hard time of it. The alms are religiously shared out among the prisoners. If there is not enough to go around, the rolls are cut into equal parts, sometimes even as many as six parts, so that each prisoner is sure to get his piece. I remember the first time I was given alms in money. It was soon after my arrival in prison. I was coming back from the morning's work alone, with a convoy soldier. I crossed paths with a mother and her daughter, a girl of about ten, pretty as a little angel. I had already seen them once. The mother was a soldier's wife, a widow. Her husband, a young soldier, had been on trial and had died in the prisoners' ward of the hospital while I, too, was lying sick there. His wife and daughter came to take leave of him; they both wept terribly. When she saw me, the girl blushed and whispered something to her mother; the mother stopped at once, rummaged in her purse for a quarter kopeck, and gave it to the girl. The girl rushed after me .?.?. "Here 'unfortunate,' take a little kopeck for Christ's sake," she cried, running ahead of me and

putting the coin in my hand. I took her little kopeck, and the girl went back to her mother perfectly content. I held on to that little kopeck for a long time.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Boehme:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive at this point, people have do something to make these individuals survives, being in the middle of the actual crowded place and notice by simply surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated the idea for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a book your ability to survive boost then having chance to stand than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading a new book, we give you that Notes from a Dead House book as starter and daily reading book. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Matthew Dealba:

Do you certainly one of people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained inside straightway, hold on guys this specific aren't like that. This Notes from a Dead House book is readable by simply you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the details here are arrange for enjoyable examining experience without leaving even decrease the knowledge that want to supply to you. The writer associated with Notes from a Dead House content conveys objective easily to understand by many people. The printed and e-book are not different in the information but it just different available as it. So , do you even now thinking Notes from a Dead House is not loveable to be your top listing reading book?

Kathryn Cortez:

This book untitled Notes from a Dead House to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, this is because when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit upon it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book retailer or you can order it by means of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you easier to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to your account to past this publication from your list.

Hilary Winters:

The book untitled Notes from a Dead House contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains your girlfriend idea with easy approach. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do not really worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was authored by famous author. The author will bring you in the new age of literary works. You can read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or device, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can open up their official web-site along with order it. Have a nice learn.

Read Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky for online ebook

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky books to read online.

Online Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky ebook PDF download

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky Doc

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky Mobipocket

Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky EPub

0OT21EY84ZH: Notes from a Dead House By Fyodor Dostoevsky