

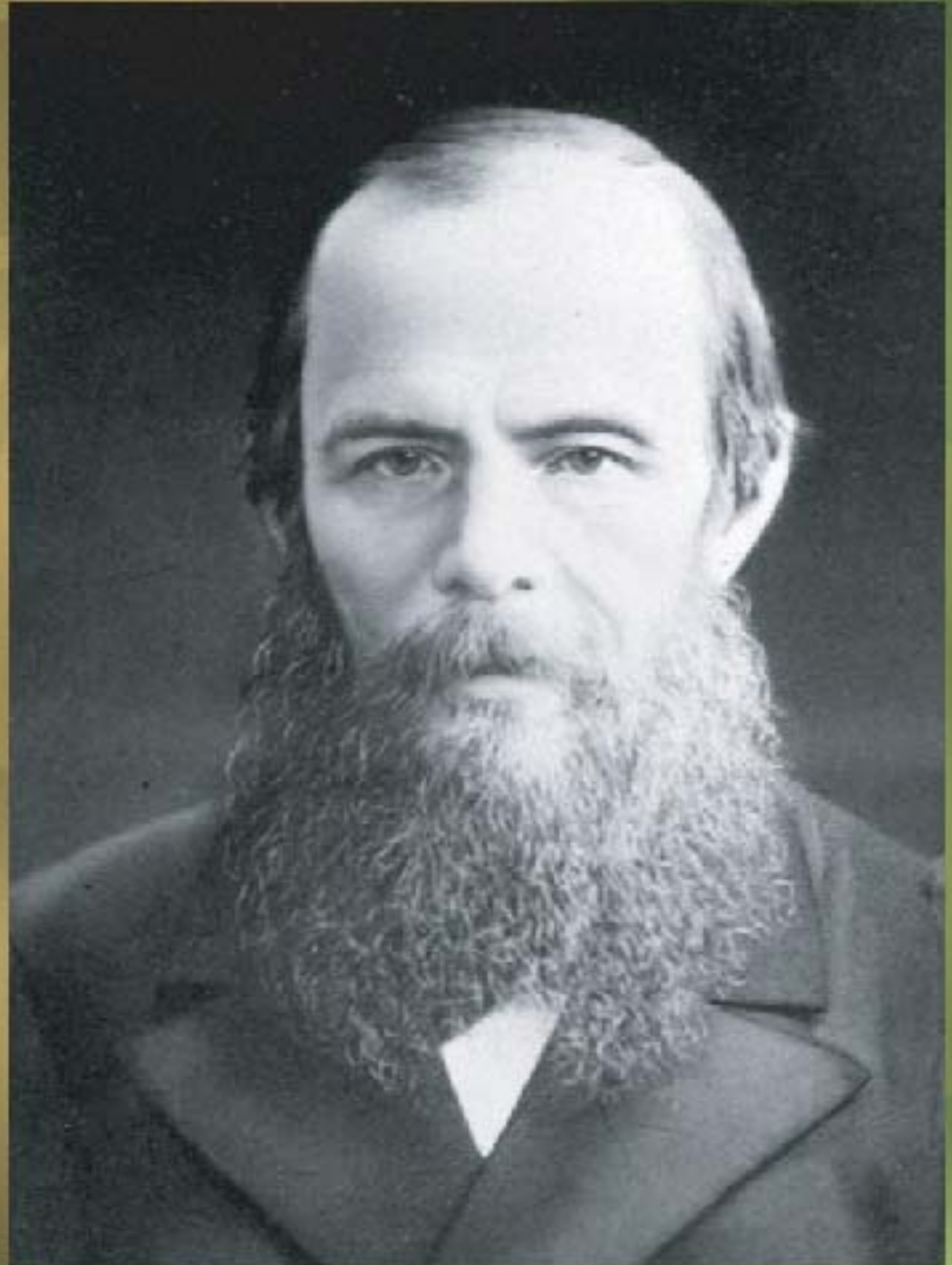
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THE ELECTRONIC MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA

Fyodor Mikhailovich DOSTOYEVSKY

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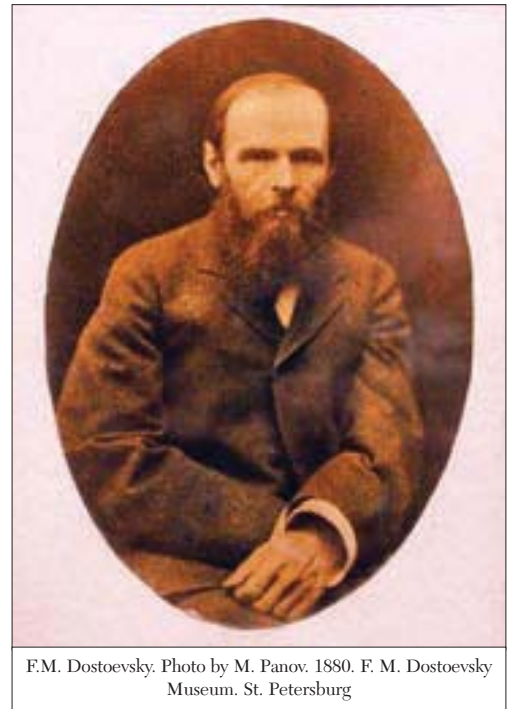
FYODOR MIKHAILOVICH DOSTOYEVSKY



A great Russian writer who has become the symbol of the mysterious Russian soul for the whole world...

His life itself resembles a thrilling novel where tragic pages come after joyous and bright ones. We shall turn the pages of this exciting novel, which is so much like the great books by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky – "Poor Folk", "White Nights", "Crime and Punishment", "The Brothers Karamazov", "The Possessed" and "The Idiot". We shall tell only about some points of his life and creative work — it is impossible to pay attention to everything, because this subject is really inexhaustible.

First, try to imagine what he felt and what he wrote on his gloomy days in Florence where he stayed together with his Muse and Good Angel Anna Grigorievna Dostoyevskaya, maiden name Snitkina, after their beloved daughter Sonechka had died at a very young age in Geneva. He was nearly desperate being short of money and pursued by editors and creditors.



F.M. Dostoyevsky. Photo by M. Panov. 1880. F. M. Dostoyevsky Museum. St. Petersburg

F.DOSTOYEVSKY: My God, oh my God! Here it is, Florence, which many people who love the beautiful dream about. What remarkable things are around! Piazza della Signoria, Loggia of the Lanzi, David by Michelangelo... And so dark is in my heart! No desire for reading, writing or looking around! But I have to write, otherwise I shall not finish my work in time. Katkov is not going to wait for long. Our publishers are harsh and not very sentimental people. Well, as the saying is, it's time to put the hand to the plough. I am writing about Prince Myshkin, but put my own thoughts and feelings into his soul "It was a recollection of Switzerland, during the first year of his cure, the very first months. At that time he had been pretty nearly an idiot still; he could not speak properly, and had difficulty in understanding when others spoke to him. He climbed the mountain-side, one sunny morning, and wandered long and aimlessly with a certain thought in

his brain, which would not become clear. Above him was the blazing sky, below, the lake; all around was the horizon, clear and infinite. He looked out upon this, long and anxiously. He remembered how he had stretched out his arms towards the beautiful, boundless blue of the horizon, and wept, and wept. What had so tormented him was the idea that he was a stranger to all this, that he was outside this glorious festival....

What was this universe? What was this grand, eternal pageant to which he had yearned from his childhood up, and in which he could never take part? Every morning the same magnificent sun; every morning the same rainbow in the waterfall; every evening the same glow on the snow-mountains. Every little fly that buzzed in the sun's rays was a singer in the universal chorus, "knew its place, and was happy in it." Every blade of grass grew and was happy. Everything knew its path and loved it, went forth with a song and returned with a song; only he knew nothing, understood nothing, neither men nor words, nor any of nature's voices; he was a stranger and an outcast"

A. SNITKINA: I know that the whole Russia would be engrossed in this new novel, "The Idiot"! How really remarkably and poetically Fedya writes! It is not for nothing that he likes poetry so much. Especially Pushkin and Lermontov. He often repeats Lermontov's words: "...years pass on by - all the best years ..." All the best years... Now I can also repeat these words, though being a writer's wife, especially the wife of a great writer isn't all milk and honey ... When I saw him for the first time, I could not even imagine that things will turn this way. I came to Dostoyevsky when he was at the height of his fame. The great writer, the torch of the Russian Land! I was mad about his books, and when I got the offer to work as a private stenographer for Dostoyevsky, I was overjoyed. But what did I see? A poorly groomed and unhealthy gentleman in years, who was annoyed with everything and everybody. However, the time passed and the things settled somehow ...

Before Fyodor Mikhailovich met Anna Grigorievna on this lucky occasion, many things had happened in his life. Even after many years, Dostoyevsky recalled with love and admiration the light-hearted years of his childhood spent in a devout and religious Russian family typical of that time.



A.G. Dostoevskaya. Photo by C. Richard. 1867. Geneva



Mariya Fyodorovna Dostoevskaya (1800-1837). Writer's mother.
Photocopy of a Popov's pastel. 1823.
F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



Michail Andrejewitsch Dostojewski (1789-1839). Der Vater des Schriftstellers. Fotografie nach einem Pastell von Popow. 1823.
F. M. Dostojewski-Museum. Sankt Petersburg

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: As long as I remember myself, I have remembered my parents' love for me. In our family we knew the Gospel from almost the early childhood. I was only ten when I already knew almost all of the most important events of the Russian history from Karamsin's book, which our father read to us aloud in the evenings. Every visit to Kremlin and Moscow cathedrals was something special for me. Now, I often get to think and ask myself: what are the impressions today's young people have mainly received during the childhood?

A. SNITKINA: Then there was St.Petersburg, his young years, where he learned at the Mikhailovskoye military engineering school, which he hated, and desired to break out from this stagnant surrounding. Nevertheless, Fedya loved St.Petersburg, although he sometimes cursed it hourly. He has written about this love in the novel "White Nights".

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: What's the use of acquaintances for me? I know the whole Petersburg anyway. That is why I felt as if everybody had left me when the whole Petersburg suddenly set out to the country. I was afraid of being left alone and for the whole three days I have wandered around the streets deep in melancholy, absolutely unaware what was the matter with me. Whether I go to the Nevsky prospekt, or to the garden, or go along the embarkment – I meet none of the people I've got used to see at the same place and at the same time throughout the year. Of course, they don't know me - but I still know them. The houses are also familiar to me. When I go by, each of them as if runs ahead of me to the street, looks at me with all his windows and nearly says: "Good afternoon! How are you? I am well too, thanks God. In May I'll get one more storey;" or else: "How are you? I am going to be repaired tomorrow;" or else "I have nearly burnt, but then I got frightened," and so on. Of them, I have the favourite ones, and also have intimate friends: one is going to receive medical care from the architect this summer. I shall come and see every day to make sure they will not cure him to death, God save him!

A. SNITKINA: From his very young years Fedya dreamed of creative work, recognition and success. His soul was striving to express to everybody his



Mariinsky Hospital for the poor. The building in which Dostoevskys lived. F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg

inmost and secret being. He has always believed that his works would help the word to be better, kinder and more fair. Indeed, Fedya has almost immediately received recognition in the literary world.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: How brightly and nicely this all started! I still remember how I was welcomed for the first time by literary Petersburg! Something young, fresh and good happened then - something that remains forever in the heart. We were twenty and a few years old that time. I lived in Petersburg, and a year passed since I had retired from engineer's service with vague and uncertain purposes. In the beginning of winter I suddenly started writing "Poor Folk", my first short novel; I had never written anything before. Having completed the novel, I did not know what to do and to whom should I give it. I had absolutely no contacts in the literary circles, except for Grigorovich, but he himself had written nothing yet at that time. He lived in Nekrasov's flat then. One day he came to my flat and said: bring your manuscript to me. Nekrasov is going to publish a collection of works and I'll show him the manuscript. One can only imagine what Nekrasov meant for me that time. A God, a Celestial in the Earth!

A. SNITKINA: Fedya was writing easily and freely that time. He did not need any stenographers like me. The publishers and creditors did not pursue him and he put the finishing strokes on each his sentence with pleasure.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Actually, I thought little about the success and was literally afraid of the "Notes of the Fatherland" party, Nekrasov and Belinsky. What am I for them? I thought they would laugh at my "Poor Folk" which I wrote with passion and tears. In the evening after giving away the manuscript I went somewhere, to one of my former friends. I came home at four a.m. on a white night of Petersburg, which was bright like a day. I didn't go to bed but just sat by the window. Suddenly the doorbell rang, which was very surprising for me. As soon as I opened the door, Nekrasov and Grigorovich rushed to me and started embracing me in delight, nearly crying. Nekrasov said: «Today I'll take your novel to Belinsky, you'll get acquainted and see what a warm-hearted man he is!»

A. SNITKINA: Fedya told me a long story on this delightful evening in Florence. He spoke how



N. A. Nekrasov. Engraving by I. Pozhalostin from a portrait by I. Kramskoy. 1878. F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



F. M. Dostoevsky's manuscripts for the novel "The Adolescent" (copy). F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



V.G. Belinsky. L. Barklay's photograph of the lithograph of the 1840s. St. Petersburg

Nekrasov run to Belinsky saying: “A new Gogol came”! And Belinsky answered: “Gogols seem to grow like mushrooms!” But after he read the manuscript, he cried to Nekrasov: “Bring him to me as soon as possible!” When Fedya came, he started to speak ardently with burning eyes: “Do you understand what you have written! You could write this only by your first-hand flair, as an artist. The truth is open to you. It was announced to you as an artist, it’s a gift. Appreciate your gift and remain faithful and you’ll become a great writer!”

The relations between Dostoyevsky and Belinsky deserve special attention. On the one hand, they were attracted to each other, but on the other, they were pulled away from each other. Both understood that Russia must change in some way and embark on a new path of development. The question was what is this path? “Furious Vissarion” always had his own answers to all questions ...

V. BELINSKY: You understand well, Fyodor Mikhailovich, that the modern society should be based on sane grounds and rely on the achievements of science and not drag after moss-grown obscurants. The State has to adopt the advanced concepts of the best socialists of the West, for example, Proudhon or Feuerbach. Only this way can we build a new society on communist principles.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Vissarion Grigorievich, I agree with you when you say that a lot must be changed in Russia. However, it follows from your words that we should revise absolutely everything. And what about the family traditions, folk morality and, finally, the right of property

V. BELINSKY: You are too naive, why don’t you understand that without rejecting all this stuff, we’ll never build anything and trail along at the back of civilisation.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Hence, there will be no individual freedom in your new society. Without individual freedom, pardon me, a person turns into a slave

V. BELINSKY: It is in today’s society, my good Fyodor Mikhailovich, that a person turns into a



Unknown photographer. 1860

slave. Meanwhile, socialism does not destroy the individual freedom, but, conversely, restores it at a level of unprecedented greatness but on a new, adamantine basis. We'll see a perfectly free individual in the new society. This freedom will allow him finally to rule the world, to construct new cities nobody has seen before and modern railroads and to create machines able to transform the Nature

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: I say, if a person is that free, there is no need for God. It follows from your words that Jesus Christ came to the world for nothing and preached in vain the Evangelic truths that a man is sinful in nature and must learn to be humble. Otherwise, the man will ruin not only the Nature surrounding him but finally himself. Also, don't forget that God is Love. And this is not your carnal love, so-called free love. No, this is quiet, humble and merciful love. The love to a brother, the love to the insulted and the injured...

V. BELINSKY: The new society cannot be built in any way without atheism, my friend. Tell me frankly, what is your Christ for? Don't you know that it is unfair to count sins against a man and to burden him with debts and false obligations, as the society is so scoundrelly that a man cannot help doing evil deeds being economically driven to do so. It is absurd and cruel to demand things that a man cannot fulfil due to the laws of nature even if he wishes ...

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: You have depicted a monstrous society, Vissarion Grigorievich ... Without moral principles or visible signs of conscience preached by Christ!

V. BELINSKY: It's amusing to look at you, Fyodor Mikhailovich! Every time I mention Christ, your face changes as if you are going to cry. Believe me, naive man, believe, please, that if your Christ was born nowadays, he would be a plain and ordinary person, and would efface himself with the modern science and the forces that are driving mankind today.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Perhaps he would be at the head of your new trend!

V. BELINSKY: Right, right. He would surely join socialists and go with them.



Study room. Dostoevsky's icon "Holy Mother of God the Joy of all Mourners" F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



Writing desk in the study room. F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



Geneva. Bel-Air square



Geneva

Later Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky called Belinsky “a man with an amazingly untroubled conscience,” – In any case, he himself did not stand aloof of the socialist ideas; he joined the Petrashevsky circle and was arrested, tried and sentenced to penal servitude. It was only

there that Dostoyevsky’s views changed drastically, when Decembrists’ wives presented him with the Gospel, which he kept with reverence throughout his whole life. Dostoyevsky penetratingly described this episode in his "House of the Dead".

A. SNITKINA: Fyodor Mikhailovich used to tell fortunes by this Gospel. He would open it at random and read the first lines at the top of the page. It seemed as if he had read the book of his own destiny. The life really did not coddle him. Only much later did I understand why Fedya looked so depressed, unsettled and unhappy when I first saw him. Short before that he had lost his first wife Maria Dmitrievna Isaeva, with whom he got acquainted in Siberia, while serving as a common soldier of a Siberian line battalion after the penal servitude, and his beloved elder brother Michael, with whom he had published magazines "The Epoch" and "The Time". However, I dare to think that, after we met, his poor soul found rest, though for a while. Soon after the wedding, we set off to our happy and unfortunate journey abroad ...

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: I did not expect that life abroad would be like the paradise, but I could not imagine that this could be so hard. We were catastrophically short of money, therefore, I had to write as fast as I could. O, if I only had the opportunity to write for pleasure! However, my writing also did not improve the situation. The money I received for the "Crime and Punishment" were spent to pay debts. Not only my debts but also the brother’s. When he died, he left only 300 roubles. And his debts were about 25 thousand. His family had no money. Both the widow and the children grouped around me, waiting for rescue. How could I leave them without help? I went to Moscow and wangled 10 thousand from my old and wealthy aunt. And after that, I was entirely in bondage to the publisher Stellovsky.

A. SNITKINA: This unscrupulous man, who saw our strained circumstances, bought all rights for publishing your writing works for only 3 thousand and, moreover, he demanded a new novel unpublished as yet.



Geneva

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: In Geneva, where our little daughter rests in peace, we were also very short of money. We borrowed 5 to 10 franks at a time from Ogarev and lived all in one little room ...

A. SNITKINA: And how I put my only woollen skirt in pledge last winter and Fedya put his trousers in pledge!

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Oh, how I wish I could go home, to Russia! But I can’t – the creditors would not let me!

Nevertheless, they did return to Russia. They did not expect

that Dostoyevsky's nation-wide fame, which has grown immensely during the 4 years they were abroad, would bring them a hint of material welfare. Magazines of diverse subject matters wished to publish his works. Anna Grigorievna started publishing the earlier novels by Fyodor Mikhailovich, which brought them up to 3 thousand roubles a year. Dostoyevsky got 250 roubles per sheet for the novel "A Raw Youth" and 300 roubles for "The Brothers Karamazov". "Diary of a Writer" – an unwitnessed style for Russia in which Dostoyevsky commented on-the-fly the urgent problems and carried on a dialogue with the readers — was also in great demand. This was a prototype of today's mass media. The famous



Opening of a monument to A.S.Pushkin. Photo. 1880
F. M. Dostoevsky Museum. St. Petersburg

speech delivered on the occasion of erection of the Pushkin monument in Moscow was the apotheosis of his unselfish serving the Russian literature and Russian people.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: The destination of Russian people is undoubtedly all-European and world-wide. To become a real Russian or to become completely Russian may mean only becoming a brother for everybody, all-human, if you wish. All that Slavophilism and the Westernism is not more than a great misunderstanding, although it is historically necessary. Our destiny is universality won not by the sword but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite the mankind. Oh, the peoples of Europe are not aware how they are dear for us! I believe that later on, we, that is, not exactly we but the future Russian people will all understand that to become a real Russian would mean: to try to bring reconciliation to the European contradictions and to show the outcome of the European melancholy in the Russian soul, all-human and all-joining, to put there all our brothers with the fraternal love and, finally, perhaps to utter the ultimate word of a great, common harmony, and the fraternal final concord of all tribes in the Christ Gospel Law! I know too well that my words

may seem exalted, exaggerated and fantastic. Well, do I speak about the economic fame, the fame of a sword or science? I speak only about the brotherhood of people and I say that the Russian heart is perhaps inclined best of all for the world-wide, and universal fraternal solidarity; I see signs of this in the Russian history, in gifted people, and in the artistic genius of Pushkin!

It can be said without exaggeration that this Dostoyevsky's speech stirred up the whole Russia. But his days were numbered. The lung emphysema ruined his already ailing health.

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Annushka, honey, give me the Gospel please. Now I'll open it and you will read.

A. SNITKINA: "But John forbade him, saying: I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? For now, it must be; it is proper for us to do that which fulfils all righteousness."

F. DOSTOYEVSKY: Did you hear: "it must be", - hence, I'll die.

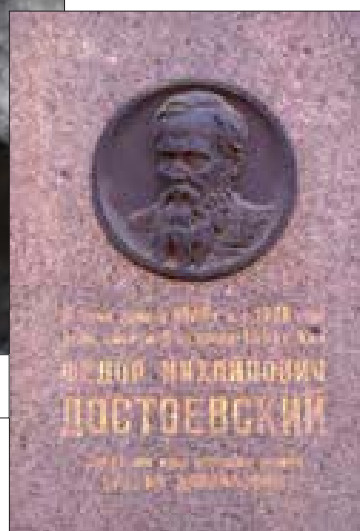
On January 28, 1881, on 8.38 p.m. the heart of the man who brought world fame for Russia stopped beating. Enormous crowds of people came to his grave on the day of funeral. Since then, the suffering and loving heart of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky has been beating not only in the chest of every educated Russian. It is in the chest of everybody on the Earth, waking up the best and the brightest feelings and making the people think about eternal and imperishable values not susceptible to oblivion and decay.



Study room. A clock belonging to writer's younger brother, Andrei Mikhailovich, stopped at the hour and the day Dostoyevsky died: January 28, 1881. F. M. Dostoyevsky Museum. St. Petersburg



F. M. Dostoyevsky in the coffin. Drawn by I. Kramskoy. January 30, 1881. Petersburg



The memorial board at the house where Dostoyevsky lived and worked

