

from his friend

The Trans

GORE OT OUMA.

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G O R E O T O U M A

A COMEDY

FROM THE RUSSIAN OF GRIBOIEDOFF

TRANSLATED BY NICHOLAS BENARDAKY.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE undertaken to present to the English public the *chef-d'œuvre* of the Russian stage, the *GORE OT OUMA* of Griboiedoff. This production of a rising man of talent, whom, unfortunately, death prevented from showing any further development of his powers, is equally remarkable as a brilliant literary achievement, and as the bold step of an author who first dared to raise the veil which covered the faults of his contemporaries. Great was the wrath which he excited, but he never swerved from the road he had opened; and he struck with a firm and resolute hand at the base of the stupendous edifice of prejudices which centuries of ignorance had reared. *Gore ot Ouma* created a strong sensation, not only in the literary circles of Moscow, where it first made its appearance, but in all classes of Russian society. A great number of its verses remain as proverbs to the present

day. There is in Griboiedoff more of the character of Juvenal than of Molière. His style is strong and concise, and bears, from its very want of poetic expression, rather the aspect of a severe *satire* than that of a witty *comedy*. The author clearly perceives the prevailing faults of his contemporaries; he smiles at their ignorance and frivolity; but, a real patriot in his soul, he becomes bitter when thundering against the servile imitation of foreigners which distinguished his epoch. Griboiedoff is a real caricature painter. A few words, a single sentence, is sufficient to present a clear idea of the character of every personage in the play. Throw a glance on this striking picture! Look in the foreground at the selfish, pompous, and servile figure of Famoussoff, the important man, who makes royal receptions to all Moscow, and scolds his servant for being out at the elbows! How affecting his despair is, when he exclaims, at the discovery of his daughter's intimacy with Tchatsky—" *Good Heavens! What will the Princess Maria Alexeievna say to all this?*"

Your attention is assuredly next attracted by the rough voice of *Skalozoub*, the worthy old soldier, whose head nothing ever entered save parades, files, and ranks.