



Ma'ruf al-Rusafi: His Life and Works

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Abstract

The humanist Iraqi poet, Ma'ruf al-Rusafi born in al-Rusafa district of Baghdad in 1875 A.D, his early education was confined to the traditional Kuttab (Quranic School). He later joined 'Al-Rushdiyya' Military School in Baghdad, but left after three years, having failed the course. Then he was fortunate in having al-Shaikh Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, an authority in Arabic, as his guide for twelve years, who introduced him to Islamic Principles, Sciences, Sufism and Linguistics.

Al-Rusafi began his career as a school teacher of Arabic; then he went to Istanbul where he lectured in Arabic and edited the Newspaper 'Sabil al-Rashad'. In 1912 A.D. he became one of the Representative of Iraq in the Turkish Chamber of Deputies. Then he returned to Iraq where he unwillingly accepted the post of vice chairman of a committee on Translation and Arabization and edited the short-lived daily newspaper "Al-A'mal".

He started his literary career by publishing articles on Social and Political issues in Syrian and Egyptian Journals such as 'Al-Muqtataf' and 'Al-Mu'ayyad'.

Al-Rusafi's reputation, soon spread throughout the Arab world, because of his powerful poems, especially of the tyranny of Sultan Abdul Hamid and later of British Imperialism. His chiefst work is his Diwan (collection of poetry) published in 1910. A second and much enlarged edition of the Diwan came out also in Beirut in 1932 and was republished several times. The Diwan however does not include all of Rusafi's poetry. He did not take sufficient care to preserve all his works. Besides this, he wrote various important books on Historical, Political and Social issues for the development of Iraqi people, which some are published while some are in manuscript form.

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