



The Epistle of Forgiveness: Volumes One and Two (Library of Arabic Literature)

Abu l-Ala al-Maarri

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The Epistle of Forgiveness: Volumes One and Two (Library of Arabic Literature) Abu l-Ala al-Maarri Known as “one of the most complex and unusual texts in Arabic literature” (*Banipal Magazine*), *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is the lengthy reply by the prolific Syrian poet and prose writer, Abu l-'Ala' al-Ma'arri (d. 449 H/1057 AD), to a letter by an obscure grammarian, Ibn al-Qari. With biting irony, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* mocks Ibn al-Qari's hypocrisy and sycophancy by imagining he has died and arrived with some difficulty in Heaven, where he meets famous poets and philologists from the past. In al-Maarri's imaginative telling, Ibn al-Qari also glimpses Hell and converses with the Devil and various heretics.

Al-Ma'arri—a maverick, a vegan, and often branded a heretic himself—seems to mock popular ideas about the Hereafter. Among other things, he introduces us to hypocrites, poets, princes, rebels, mystics, and apostates, with asides on piety, superstition, wine-drinking, old age, and other topics. This remarkable book is the first complete translation of this masterpiece into any language, all the more impressive because of Al-Ma'arri's highly ornate and difficult style, his use of rhymed prose, and his numerous obscure words and expressions. Replete with erudite commentary, amusing anecdotes, and sardonic wit, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* is an imaginative tour-de-force by one of the most pre-eminent figures in classical Arabic literature.

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