**Shaykh Mahmúd of 'Akká**

a story of forgiveness

It is related of Shaykh Mahmúd of 'Akká that he hated the Bahá'ís. While many of his fellow-townsmen had gradually come to realize how very wrong they had been and were speaking of the prisoners in terms of appreciation and praise, Shaykh Mahmúd remained adamant in his hatred. One day he was present at a gathering where people were talking of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a good man, a remarkable man. The Shaykh could bear it no longer and stormed out, saying that he would show up this 'Abbas Effendi for what he was. In blazing anger he rushed to the mosque, where he knew 'Abdu'l-Bahá could be found at that hour, and laid violent hands upon Him.

The Master looked at the Shaykh with that serenity and dignity which only He could command, and reminded him of what the Prophet Muhammad had said: 'Be generous to the guest, even should he be an infidel.' Shaykh Mahmúd turned away. His wrath had left him. So had his hate. All that he was conscious of was a deep sense of shame and bitter compunction. He fled to his house and barred the door. Some days later he went straight into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, fell on his knees, and besought forgiveness: 'What door but thine can I seek; whose bounty can I hope for but thine?' He became a devoted Bahá'í.

from *'Abdu'l-Bahá* by H.M.Balyuzi, p33-34.

This story was related to Mr Balyuzi nearly 40 years ago (nearly 40 years before 1971) by Hájí Habíbu'lláh Afnán, a member of the family of the Báb, who as a young man had heard it from Shaykh Mahmúd himself.