E. T. A. HOFFMANN'S

HAIMATOCHARE

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

BY

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This little known short story, originally written and printed in German in 1819, was located while searching for descriptions of Berlin in the 1820's. The piece has never before appeared in English and pre-dates by nearly 40 years Jarves' Kiana, long identified as the first piece of fiction using Hawaii as its setting.
Foreword

Upon return from his remarkable voyage, having circled the globe one and a half times, my friend Adalbert von Chamisso acquainted me with the following letters. They shed light on the unfortunate fate of two naturalists and deserve publication.

With sadness, even with dismay, we often notice how a seemingly harmless event can tear apart the strongest ties of friendship with the result that disaster is brought about where normally unqualified benefits would be expected.

E. T. A. Hoffmann

I. TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE CAPTAIN GENERAL AND GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Port Jackson, June 21, 18...

Your Excellency assigned my friend Mr. Brougthon as naturalist to the expedition which is being readied to sail to O-Wahu. Since the brevity of my last stay on that island prevented me from completing various noteworthy natural observations it has been my long-standing ardent wish to pay another visit to O-Wahu. This desire is now twice as keen because Mr. Brougthon and I have for a long time been in closest contact through scientific interests and joint research and we are accustomed to share observations which we instantly verify through mutual evaluation. I therefore ask Your Excellency for permission to accompany my friend Brougthon on the expedition to O-Wahu.

Most respectfully, ...

J. Menzies
P.S. I join my friend Menzies in his request and hope that Your Excellency will permit him to accompany me to O-Wahu. Only when he shares my aspirations with his usual kindness shall I be able to accomplish what is expected of me.

A. Brougthon

2. THE GOVERNOR'S RESPONSE

I noticed with sincere pleasure how science has brought you, Gentlemen, together. From this beautiful alliance and joint endeavor only the fullest, most excellent results can be expected.

3. J. MENZIES TO E. JOHNSTONE IN LONDON

On board of the *Discovery*, July 2, 18...

You are right, my dear friend, the last time I wrote to you I really was afflicted by some fits of melancholy. Life at Port Jackson had become an utter boredom and I was painfully longing for my splendid paradise, the lovely island of O-Wahu, from which I had only recently departed. My friend Brougthon, a learned and good-natured man, alone was able to brighten my days at Port Jackson and to keep me responsive to the demands of science. But he too, just like I, was longing to leave Port Jackson with its limited opportunities for scientific projects. If I am not mistaken I wrote to you that a beautiful ship had been promised King Teimotu of O-Wahu. This ship was to be built and equipped at Port Jackson. After its completion, Captain Bligh was ordered to take the ship to O-Wahu and to remain there for some time in order to strengthen the cordial alliance. You can imagine my great joy because I was sure that I could go along. No wonder then that the governor's pronouncement that Brougthon was the chosen one struck me like a bolt from the blue. The *Discovery* which was selected for the expedition to O-Wahu is a ship of average size and not equipped to accommodate any personnel beyond the necessary crew. This really limited my expectations for a favorable response to my application to accompany Brougthon. But Brougthon that noble man who is devoted to me with his heart and soul supported my request so effectively that the governor gave his consent. From the heading of this letter you can see that we, Brougthon and I, have already started on our voyage.

Oh, what a glorious life is awaiting me! My heart is soaring in hope, anticipation and desire at the thought that nature will unlock for me her rich treasury, every day, every hour, enabling me to claim as my own
as yet unearthed treasures and to appropriate marvels which are still unexplored.

I can see how you smile ironically about my enthusiasm, I can hear you say: "Well, he'll bring back a whole new Swammerdamm in his luggage, but when I ask him about the customs and the way of life of those foreign people whom he visited then he shows me some cloaks. When I request information about those details which cannot be found in travel books, about those specifics which can be reported only by word of mouth, then he points to a few coral strings. Beyond that he is unable to say much. He is so engrossed in his mites, bugs and butterflies that he neglects the human race!"

I know, you find it strange that my research instinct tends of all things toward the realm of insects. My only explanation to that is that the Eternal Power has woven this inclination so intricately into me that I can work only within this framework. But there is no reason to reproach me about this instinct which seems so strange to you. It will not make me forget nor neglect human beings, especially my relatives and friends.

I will never be able to equal that old Dutch lieutenant colonel who—but in order to disarm you by means of the comparison which you are bound to make between that old fellow and myself, I'll tell you in detail the strange story which just came into me mind.—The old lieutenant colonel (I made his acquaintance in Königsberg) was, as far as insects are concerned, the most eager and indefatigable naturalist ever. To him the rest of the world was dead. He, on the other hand, became conspicuous to human society only by his odious and ridiculous avarice and by his fear that some day he would be poisoned by white bread. If I am not mistaken this bread is called in German Semmel.—Every morning he baked such bread for himself and he even brought it along whenever he was invited to a meal. Nobody could induce him to eat any other bread. As to his absurd stinginess I give you the following detail: Being hale and hearty in spite of his age he took extensive walks, and as he went along the streets he held his arms away from his body to protect his ancient uniform against wear—he was determined to preserve it!

But let's get back to our subject!—The old fellow had no relatives in the whole world except a younger brother in Amsterdam. For thirty years they had not seen each other. One day, the Amsterdamer became anxious to visit his brother and took off to see him in Königsberg.—He entered the old fellow's house.—The old fellow, his head bent forward, sat at the table and examined through a magnifying glass a little black dot on a white piece of paper. The visitor intended to throw himself with a loud joyous exclamation into his brother's arms, but the latter, without looking up from the little black spot, waved him back with his
hand and ordered him to be quiet: "Sh—Sh—Sh!" "Brother", the Amsterdamer called out, "brother, what are you up to? Here I am, your brother George. After thirty years I came from Amsterdam to see you, probably for the last time in our lifes!" But the old fellow did not move—he only lisped: "Sh—Sh—Sh, the little creature is dying!"

Only then the Amsterdamer noticed that the black spot was a tiny worm, wiggling and writhing in convulsions of death. The Amsterdamer honored his brother's preoccupation and quietly sat down next to him. But after an hour had passed and the old man had not glanced up a single time at his brother, the latter impatiently jumped up, uttered a strong Dutch cuss word, left the room and set out on his return trip to Amsterdam. The old man in the meantime did not take the least notice of what happened.—Ask yourself, Edward, if you were to enter my cabin on this ship, if you were to find me engrossed in the observation of some interesting insect, would I remain spellbound by the bug or would I throw myself in your arms?

However, do keep in mind, my dear friend, that the realm of insects is indeed nature's most marvellous and mysterious storehouse. While my friend Brougthon specializes in the area of plants and of fully developed animals, I focus on the domain of those strange and often inscrutable creatures which form the transition, the link, between both.—I better stop because I don't want to fatigue you. Yet, in order to soothe your poetic mind and to bring about a complete reconciliation between us I would like to mention the ingenious term used by a German poet for those ornately colored insects: he calls them liberated flowers. Enjoy this lovely image!

Actually, why do I say so much in order to justify my inclination? Maybe I do so in order to convince myself that only the instinct of my investigative mind is driving me irresistibly to O-Wahu. Maybe I do so to dissuade myself that I am compelled by a premonition of an imminent, most unusual occurrence!—Yes, Edward, at this very moment I am seized by this notion with such a force that I am unable to continue this letter.—You'll consider me a foolish dreamer, but that's the way it is. In my mind it is stated clearly that on O-Wahu there is waiting for me either the greatest happiness or inevitable ruin.

Yours most truly, . . .

4. THE SAME CORRESPONDENT TO THE SAME ADDRESSEE

Hana-ruru on the island of O-Wahu, December 12, 18 . . .

No, I am not a dreamer, but there are presentiments—presentiments which do not delude!—Edward, I am the happiest human under the
sun, I am at life's highest point. But how can I possibly tell you every-
thing so that you can fully share my rapture, my indescribable delight?—
I will compose myself, I will see if I am able to describe to you calmly
all the details that have occurred.

Hana-ruru is the seat of King Teimotu's court, where he has extended
to us his hospitality. Not far from there is a charming wooded area which
I visited yesterday at sunset. There I had planned to catch a very rare
moth (I am sure the name won't be of any interest to you) which starts
its fitful flight after sunset. The air was sultry and filled with the
voluptuous aroma exhaled by fragrant herbs. When I entered the forest
I experienced a mysterious awe which led me to sigh passionately. The
moth which originally had brought me here continued its flight directly
in front of me, but all strength had left me, I was frozen into immobility
and unable to pursue it as it winged its way deeper into the forest.

Then I was drawn, as if by invisible hands, into a thicket whence
there came murmurs and whispers like tender pledges of love. I barely
had stepped into the thicket when I beheld a heavenly sight. On the
multicolored tapestry of gleaming columbine wings there lay the
prettiest, handsomest, loveliest island beauty that had ever crossed my
path! Only the general outline indicated that the lovely creature belonged
here: coloring, posture, general appearance, everything was unique. In
my state of ecstasy I almost stopped breathing. Cautiously I closed in
on the sweet creature. She was apparently asleep—I took hold of her,
and carried her off—the most gorgeous jewel of the island was mine!
I named her Haimatochare. I completely wallpapered her little room
attractively in gold, and laid out a couch of the very same multicolored
shiny dove feathers on which I had found her! She seemed to under-
stand me, to sense my esteem for her.

I am sorry, Edward—I say good-bye to you—I have to look after my
lovely creature, my Haimatochare—. I open her little room. She is
stretched out on her couch, she plays with the feathers which shine in
many colors. Oh Haimatochare! Farewell, Edward!

Yours most truly, . . .

5. BROUGTHON TO THE GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Hana-ruru, December 20, 18 . . .

Captain Bligh has reported in detail to Your Excellency about our
successful voyage and I am sure that he mentioned with praise the
friendly reception which we got from our friend Teimotu. He is delighted
about the generous present from Your Excellency, and he repeats over and over that everything of use and value which is produced on O-Wahu shall be considered our property. Queen Kahumanu is so deeply impressed by the scarlet cloak with gold embroidery which Your Excellency had me take along as a present for her that she has lost her former natural cheerfulness and has become completely enraptured by it. Early in the morning Kahumanu goes into the deepest, most solitary part of the forest. There she throws the cloak in various ways over her shoulders and practices expressive motions with which she will entertain her guests at court in the evening. Repeatedly she has attacks of strange depressions which cause grief to our good friend Teimotu.

I have, however, often succeeded in cheering up the pitiable queen by means of a breakfast of broiled fish, which she loves very much, followed by a good glass of gin or rum which markedly soothes her. It is very strange that Kahumanu runs after our friend Menzies wherever he goes, and whenever she believes herself unnoticed she embraces him and calls him by the most affectionate names. I am almost inclined to believe that she is secretly in love with him.

By the way, I am sorry that I have to report to Your Excellency that Menzies from whom I had expected the best has become more an obstacle than a help for my research. While he is not willing to respond to Kahumanu’s love, he is in the grip of another foolish, even criminal, passion which has misled him to play an outrageous trick on me. If he does not desist from his folly it will in all probability separate us for good. I regret ever having asked Your Excellency’s permission for him to join the expedition to O-Wahu. But how could I anticipate that a man whom I had found, for many years, most trustworthy would be likely to change so radically due to his uncanny fit of delusion. I shall take the liberty to report to Your Excellency the details of this incident which hurts me deeply. In case Menzies should not make amends for his ill deed I shall ask Your Excellency for protection against a man who had the audacity to act malignantly where he had been received with unreserved friendship.

Most respectfully . . .

6. MENZIES TO BROUGTHON

No, I cannot bear it any longer! Your are evading me, I can detect anger and disdain in the way you look at me. You speak of disloyalty, of treason and seem to refer to me! And yet, in the whole realm of possibilities I search in vain for a reason which could justify your behavior toward me, your most loyal friend. By what action, by what undertaking
did I offend you? I am sure that it is nothing but a misunderstanding which permits you to doubt for a moment my devotion and my loyalty. I beg you, Broughthon, explain the unfortunate mystery and become once more my friend.

Davis who is bringing you this message has been ordered to ask you for your immediate answer: I am most painfully tortured by impatience.

7. BROUGHTHON TO MENZIES

You are still asking in what way you have offended me? Indeed, this naivety befits beautifully a fellow who outraged, in a shocking way, not only friendship but common laws as they prevail in civilized society. Don’t you want to understand me? Well, then I shall shout in order for the world to be horrified at your crime, yes, I shall shout the name into your ear, the name which expresses your sacrilege!—Haimatochare!—Yes, that is the name which you gave to the one who was mine, whom you have stolen from me, whom you keep hidden from the world, the one whom I proudly meant to call my own in the permanent records.

But no!—I will not yet despair in doubt of your virtuousness, I am still determined to believe that your loyal heart will conquer the unfortunate passion which carried you away in a sudden frenzy!—Menzies! Surrender Haimatochare to me and I shall take you to my heart as my most loyal, most intimate friend. Then all pain shall be forgotten of the injury which you have afflicted on me through your heedless act. Yes, I shall call the rape of Haimatochare a heedless act only, and not a disloyal and criminal one. Surrender Haimatochare to me!

8. MENZIES TO BROUGTHON

Friend! By what strange madness have you been seized? I am supposed to have taken Haimatochare from you? Haimatochare who, like her whole race, has nothing to do with you—Haimatochare whom I found unattached in the open wilderness where she was sleeping on the most beautiful carpet. I was the first one to cast eyes on her lovingly, I was the one who bestowed name and rank on her!

Really, if you call me disloyal I have to call you demented since you, deluded by base jealousy, lay claim to what is mine now and will be mine forever. Haimatochare is my own and I shall call her my own in those records in which you are boastfully planning to appear. I shall never let go of my beloved Haimatochare. I shall gladly sacrifice everything for Haimatochare, even my life which takes its meaning only through her!
9. BROUGTHON TO MENZIES

Impudent thief! You mean to say that Haimatochare is none of my concern? That you have found her in the open wilderness? Liar! Wasn't the carpet on which Haimatochare slept my property? Wasn't that the indication that Haimatochare belonged to me and to nobody else? Release Haimatochare or I shall make your crime known to the whole world. Not I, you are deluded by the basest jealousy, you intend to boast with property which is not yours. But I'll see to it that you don't succeed. Surrender Haimatochare or I shall declare you for the vilest scoundrel!

10. MENZIES TO BROUGTHON

Triple scoundrel yourself! I surrender Haimatochare only over my dead body!

11. BROUGTHON TO MENZIES

It is only over your dead body that you'll surrender Haimatochare?—Well, then let pistols decide to whom Haimatochare belongs. Tomorrow we shall meet on the desolate plain outside of Hana-ruru not far from the volcano, at six o'clock in the evening. I hope your pistols are in good condition.

12. MENZIES TO BROUGTHON

I shall arrive on the specified spot at the set time. Haimatochare shall be the witness of the duel which will decide to whom she belongs.

13. CAPTAIN BLIGH TO THE GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Hana-ruru on the island of O-Wahu, December 26, 18...

I have to perform the sad duty to report to Your Excellency the shocking incident which has bereaved us of two most valuable men. For quite some time I had noticed that Messrs. Menzies and Brougthon who used to be inseparable bosom friends allied in close amity had become alienated from each other though I was unable to detect the cause of their estrangement. Most recently they carefully avoided any personal contact resorting to the exchange of letters which our first mate Davis had to carry to and from. Davis told me that both had become very emotional upon receiving these letters and that Brougthon especially had
gotten, most recently, in a state of furor. Last night, Davis noticed that Brougthon was loading his pistols and hurriedly walking out of Hana-ruru. After a short delay, Davis was able to contact me and to inform me about his suspicion that Menzies and Brougthon might be planning a duel. Accompanied by Lieutenant Collnet and Ship's Surgeon Whidby I hurried to the deserted region near the volcano outside of Hana-ruru. It seemed to me the appropriate locale if there was actually a duel in the offing. I was not mistaken. Before we reached the place we heard a shot which was immediately followed by a second one. We rushed on as fast as we could but we were too late. We found both in a puddle of blood on the ground, Menzies fatally shot in the head, Brougthon mortally wounded in the chest. There was no trace of life.

They had duelled at a distance of barely ten feet and between them lay the unfortunate object which Menzies' documents identify as the cause for Brougthon's hatred and jealousy. In a small cardboard box the inside of which was beautifully papered in gold and upholstered with shiny feathers I found a small insect. Its outline was unusual, its coloring beautiful. Davis who is versed in natural sciences was ready to declare the insect as a little louse though its coloring, its strangely formed abdomen and its legs deviate markedly from the species. On the lid was written the name: Haimatochare.

Menzies had found this previously unknown strange little creature on the back of a beautiful dove shot down by Brougthon. Considering himself the first finder, Menzies intended to introduce the insect under the name Haimatochare to the scientific world. Brougthon, on the other hand, claimed that he was the first finder since the insect had been on the body of the dove which he had shot down. This would have entitled him to appropriate the insect for himself. Thus the fateful quarrel arose which led to the death of two noble men.

In the meantime I would like to note that Mr. Menzies has declared the insect a new species between *pediculus pubescens, thorace trapezoideo, abdomen ovale posterius emarginato ab latere undulato etc. habitans in homine, Hottentottis, Groenlandisque escam dilectam preabens, and: nirmus crassicornis, capite ovato oblongo, scutello thorace majore, abdomen lineari lanceolato, habitans in anate, ansere et boschade.* [between the pubic louse and the horny nirmus. The former has a trapezoid thorax and an oval abdomen with posterior and undulate lateral protrusions, etc. It can be found on humans, and is relished by Hottentots and Greenlanders. The latter has an elongated oval head, a larger than usual thorax shield and a drawn-out spearlike abdomen. It can be found on the duck, the goose and the chicken]
From these first indications by Mr. Menzies Your Excellency will get an idea of the insect’s uniqueness. Though I am not a naturalist myself I take the liberty to add that attentive observation through a magnifying glass reveals the insect’s unusual attractiveness. This can be attributed to the shiny eyes, the beautifully colored back and the charming facility of movement not normally characteristic of such insects.

I am awaiting Your Excellency’s orders whether I shall mail the calamitous creature, under proper wrapping, to the museum, or send it to the bottom of the ocean for having caused the death of two excellent men.

Until Your Excellency’s decision Davis will keep Haimatochare in his cotton cap. I made him responsible for Haimatochare’s well-being. In the meantime I remain Your Excellency’s.

14. THE GOVERNOR’S ANSWER

Port Jackson, May 1, 18...

Your report, dear Captain, about the unfortunate death of our two gallant naturalists has filled me with deepest sorrow. Is it possible that passion for science can drive man to the point of forgetting what he owes to friendship, even to society in general?—I hope that Messrs. Menzies and Broughton had the most appropriate funeral. As far as Haimatochare is concerned I order you to send her, in deference to the two unfortunate naturalists, with usual honors to the bottom of the sea. I remain...

15. CAPTAIN BLIGH TO THE GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

On board of the Discovery, October 5, 18...

Your Excellency’s orders in regard to Haimatochare have been followed. Last night at six o’clock sharp, in the presence of the crew, in dress uniform, of King Teimotu and Queen Kahumanu, who had come aboard with several ‘ali‘i, Haimatochare was taken by Lieutenant Collnet from Davis’ cotton cap and put into the cardboard box papered in gold. This box which used to be her apartment was now to become her coffin. It was fastened to a big rock and, under a triple gun salute, I personally dropped it into the ocean. Immediately thereafter, Queen Kahumanu intonated a chant. All O-Wahuans joined her and it sounded as abominable as required by the sublime dignity of the moment. There was a second round of three gunshots followed by the distribution of food and
rum to the crew. Grog and other refreshments were served to Teimotu, Kahumanu and the rest of the O-Wahuans. The good Queen still has not gotten over the death of her dear Menzies. In order to honor the memory of that beloved man she has inflicted a wound onto her buttocks by means of a huge shark tooth, and this wound causes her great sufferings.

I still have to mention that Davis, Haimatochare’s loyal attendant, made a touching speech. He briefly described Haimatochare’s life and then he talked about the transitoriness of everything on Earth. The most hardened sailors were unable to hold back their tears, and since Davis periodically burst into appropriate lamentations he induced the O-Wahuans to do the same which considerably heightened the dignity and solemnity of the performance. Your Excellency, accept. . . .