

**THE TEMPTATION OF
SAINT ANTHONY.
ENGLISH VERSION
BY G. F. MONKSHOOD**

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The Temptation of Saint Anthony. English Version by G. F. Monkshood by Gustave Flaubert

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GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

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SAINT ANTHONY

Exemplar

THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

I

It was in the Thebaid, upon a mountain height and a space in the shape of a half-moon, shut in by great rocks.

The cabin of the hermit occupied the centre. It was made of mud and of reeds. It had a flat roof and no door. Inside there could be seen a jug and a black loaf, also, upon a wooden stand, a great book. Upon the floor, here and there, were two or three pieces of matting, a basket and a knife.

Ten paces from the hermit's hut there was a long cross planted in the ground.

and at the other end of the platform an old twisted palm-tree leaned over the abyss, for the mountain was sharply shaped and the Nile seemed like a lake at the bottom of the cliffs.

The view is hemmed in on the right and the left by the circle of the rocks. But upon the desert side were immense parallel undulations, ashen brown in colour, stretching out, one behind the other, and continually mounting; then beyond the sand, farther, the Libyan chain formed a wall the colour of chalk shaded off lightly by violet vapours.

The sun was sinking. The sky in the North was of a pearl-grey tint, whilst at the zenith clouds of a purple shade arranged like the tufts of a gigantic mane spread out upon the blue vault of heaven. The flamelike rays of the sun assumed an embrowned colour and any blue in the

sky became of pearl-like paleness. The bushes, the stones, the earth, all now seemed to have the hard look of bronze. In space there floated a golden dust so fine that it mixed, and became one with the vibrations of the light.

Saint Anthony, who has a long beard, long hair, and a tunic of goatskin, is seated with crossed legs, and is about to make plaits. When the sun went down he gave a great sigh and gazed at the horizon.

“One more day! One more day added to the past!

“In former times, however, I was not so wretched!

“Before the end of the night I commence my prayers, then I descend to obtain water and reascend by the rough pathway with my leather bottle upon my shoulder, and chanting hymns. After-

4 THE TEMPTATION OF ST ANTHONY

wards I amuse myself arranging the things that are in my hut. I take up my tools and attend to my basketmaking. My smallest actions seem to me to be duties that have nothing wearying about them. At certain regulated hours I leave my work and, praying with my two arms extended, I feel as though a fountain of mercy was poured out from on high into my heart. That fountain is dried up now ; why?" . . . He paces to and fro slowly.

" Everyone blamed me when I left the home. My mother sank in a dying condition, my sister begged me to return and the other sobbed, Ammonaria, that child whom I encountered each evening at the edge of the water-well. She ran to stay my steps. The rings upon her feet danced with light amidst the dust, and her tunic was opened and floated in the wind. The aged ascetic who led me

cried out cruel words to her. Our two camels ran ever onwards and I saw no one any more.

“At first I chose for my dwelling-place the tomb of a Pharaoh. But there is an enchantment in those underground palaces where the shadows even seem heavy with the ancient odour of aromatics. From the depths of the sarcophagi I have heard a saddened voice raised, calling me.

“I have even, and all at once, seen live and draw breath the abominable things that were the subjects of the paintings on the walls, and I have fled unto the shore of the Red Sea, fled to a citadel that was in ruins. There I had for my companions scorpions who crawled among the stones and eagles who gyrated continually above my head in the blue sky. At night I was scratched by claws, bitten

6 THE TEMPTATION OF ST ANTHONY

by beaks and rubbed by soft wings ; and awesome demons shouting in my ears, overturned me upon the earth. Once even the members of a caravan that was making its way towards Alexandria, gave me help and led me with them.

“ Then I wished to sit at the feet of the good and aged Didymus. Even though he was blind no one could equal him in his great knowledge of the sacred writings. When our study was finished he took my arm to guide him. I led him to the Paneum from whence people can see the Pharos and the ocean. We returned by way of the Port, touching elbows with men of all nations from the Cimmerians dressed in the skins of bears to the Gymnosophists of the Ganges, their flesh rubbed with malodorous stuff. Ceaselessly there was some battle going on in the streets because the Jews refused to pay a tax or