



The Ball and the Cross

G. K. Chesterton

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The bestselling novel in which Mr. Chesterton shows the practical application of the theories of faith and rationalism which he set forth so brilliantly in *Heretics* and *Orthodoxy*.

“Long ago Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in one of his early essays, stated that most of his friends were, very right, mad. He proceeded to explain, in his characteristic way, that ‘mad’ meant one thing to him and another thing to people who use words unthinkingly. ‘Words,’ said a greater man than Mr. Chesterton, ‘are the counters of wise men: they do but reckon with them; but they are the money of fools.’ IT does not matter much what value we give to the word ‘mad,’ if we agree about it in argument. Apart from physiology (and even here the borderline of sanity is not always plain), it is clear that madness is largely a matter of convention, or agreement; it is a relative thing. Public opinion has set up a standard of conduct, to transgress which in certain wild ways denotes insanity. To fight a duel in a Bloomsbury backgarden about the existence of God would probably be regarded by ninety-nine people out of a hundred as the very acme of lunacy.

“This is what the heroes of Mr. Chesterton’s fantasy, ‘The Ball and the Cross,’ seek to do. One is a Jacobite Roman Catholic Scot, the other an aggressively atheistic editor. Pursued by the law, they try to fight their duel I the cause of sincere religion and irreligion. Hampstead Heath, the South Coast, a Channel Island, a sandy beach they believe first to be a desert isle in mid-Atlantic and secondly to be the continent of Kent, and a large private lunatic asylum are the successive refuges. In the lunatic asylum they stay, thanks to the plots of Professor Lucifer, who in the first chapter of the story had provided a symbolic text for the narrative by colliding with the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral in an airship.

“It is a remarkable mixture of fancy, satire, philosophy and excitement. Every page makes one think; every chapter has some breathless moment; every incident is marked by Mr. Chesterton’s ingenious humor.” -The Bookshelf

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