



All that Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South

Stephen W. Berry

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In May 1861, Jefferson Davis issued a general call for volunteers for the Confederate Army. Men responded in such numbers that 200,000 had to be turned away. Few of these men would have attributed their zeal to the cause of states' rights or slavery. As All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South makes clear, most southern men saw the war more simply as a test of their manhood, a chance to defend the honor of their sweethearts, fiancés, and wives back home.

Drawing upon diaries and personal letters, Stephen Berry seamlessly weaves together the stories of six very different men, detailing the tangled roles that love and ambition played in each man's life. Their writings reveal a male-dominated Southern culture that exalted women as "repositories of divine grace" and treasured romantic love as the platform from which men launched their bids for greatness. The exhilarating onset of war seemed to these, and most southern men, a grand opportunity to fulfill their ambition for glory and to prove their love for women--on the same field of battle. As the realities of the war became apparent, however, the letters and diaries turned from idealized themes of honor and country to solemn reflections on love and home.

Elegant and poetic, All That Makes a Man recovers the emotional lives of unsung Southern men and women and reveals that the fiction of Cold Mountain mirrors a poignant reality. In their search for a cause worthy of their lives, many Southern soldiers were disappointed in their hopes for a Southern nation. But they still had their women's love, and there they would rebuild.



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