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General Jo Shelby's March

Anthony Arthur

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Acclaimed historian Anthony Arthur tells one of the most remarkable but surprisingly unknown stories of the post–Civil War era in full for the first time. Here is the unforgettable account of how a famous Confederate general forged a defiant new life out of crushing defeat, and how he finally achieved forgiveness and respect in his own reunited land.

General Jo Shelby had been a daring and ruthless cavalry commander, renowned and notorious for his slashing forays behind Union lines. After Appomattox, Shelby, declaring that he would never surrender, headed for Mexico. With three hundred men, some from his fighting “Iron Brigade” regiment, others adventurers, fortune hunters, and deserters, the man Arthur refers to as “the last holdout of the Confederacy” made the treacherous twelve-hundred-mile trip.

In thrilling and vivid detail, **General Jo Shelby’s March** describes the dusty and dangerous trek through a lawless Texas swarming with desperadoes, into a Mexico teeming with Juárez’s rebels and marauding Apaches. After near fratricide among his fraying band of brothers, Shelby arrived to present a quixotic proposal to Emperor Maximilian: He and his fellow Americans would take over the Mexican army and, after being reinforced by forty thousand more Confederate soldiers, the government itself. Though a dramatic, doomed, and brave endeavor, Shelby’s actions changed both himself and American history forever.

Anthony Arthur then reveals the astonishing end of Shelby’s career: his return to America and his renouncing of slavery, his nomination by President Grover Cleveland to become U.S. marshal for western Missouri, his eventual fame as a model of nineteenth-century progressivism.

General Jo Shelby’s March is a riveting book about a uniquely American man, both brave and brutal, a hero and a hothead, whose life’s startling last chapter is a microcosm of the aftermath of our most divisive war.

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