



Shopping, Seduction & Mr. Selfridge

Lindy Woodhead

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If you lived at Downton Abbey, you shopped at Selfridge's.

Harry Gordon Selfridge was a charismatic American who, in twenty-five years working at Marshall Field's in Chicago, rose from lowly stockboy to a partner in the business which his visionary skills had helped to create. At the turn of the twentieth century he brought his own American dream to London's Oxford Street where, in 1909, with a massive burst of publicity, Harry opened Selfridge's, England's first truly modern built-for-purpose department store. Designed to promote shopping as a sensual and pleasurable experience, six acres of floor space offered what he called "everything that enters into the affairs of daily life," as well as thrilling new luxuries—from ice-cream soda to signature perfumes. This magical emporium also featured Otis elevators, a bank, a rooftop garden with an ice-skating rink, and a restaurant complete with orchestra—all catering to customers from Anna Pavlova to Noel Coward. The store was "a theatre, with the curtain going up at nine o'clock." Yet the real drama happened off the shop floor, where Mr. Selfridge navigated an extravagant world of mistresses, opulent mansions, racehorses, and an insatiable addiction to gambling. While his gloriously iconic store still stands, the man himself would ultimately come crashing down.

The true story that inspired the Masterpiece series on PBS • *Mr. Selfridge* is a co-production of ITV Studios and Masterpiece

"Enthralling . . . [an] energetic and wonderfully detailed biography."—*London Evening Standard*

"Will change your view of shopping forever."—*Vogue* (U.K.)

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