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## Major Hower in Overseas Service

His History of Macy's Soon to Be Distributed  
to Members of the Society

Within the next month members of the Business Historical Society will receive a copy of *History of Macy's of New York, 1858-1919: Chapters in the Evolution of the Department Store*, by Professor Ralph M. Hower. Recently commissioned a Major in the American Expeditionary Force in Europe, the author is in service abroad as historian of the Quartermaster Corps. Major Hower was formerly a member of the Council and also Clerk of the Society, the latter position being now filled by Dr. George F. F. Lombard, who is also Executive Secretary of the Society. Since Major Hower was called away before his study of Macy history had been completed, it was decided to publish his work in two volumes, the first to terminate at 1919, the second to come down to the present. It is the first volume which is now in the press.

This book on Macy's is a study in the history of the department store, a retailing institution in the development of which America and indeed Macy's were leaders. Major Hower writes about Macy's against the background of the expanding economic life of the past three-quarters of a century and of the general developments in retailing and the department store.

The author sees the development of the department store as one thread in the weaving of the fabric of industrial capitalism. Macy's founder, Rowland H. Macy, as a petty capitalist started a small dry goods store in New York City in the 1850's; from this beginning grew a huge concern specializing in retailing, which is today the world's largest department store. Macy's has worked in an intensely competitive field in an intensely competitive business system—in its price policy it has been the very epitome of industrial capitalism. Unlike countless competing firms, it has survived and in surviving has maintained its independence of financial capitalists. Major Hower's book analyzes the administrative policies and management methods which led to this notable success.

The story, though broad in its perspective, is focused upon the decisions and the efforts of the men and women who have constituted Macy's. Notable among these, of course, were first the founder, R. H. Macy, who had been a whale fisherman, a forty-niner, a western land speculator, and a small-town general store-keeper, and then three generations of Strauses, the second of which made the famous Macy's of our day. The work of employees is also shown, from that of Margaret Getchell La Forge, who was the first store superintendent, to the little cash girls and many others of the rank and file of the Macy employees.

The book contains some early operating data which will have a special appeal to students of retailing and to present-day store executives. For example, in referring to a table which contains operating results for 1872-1876, the author says: "The importance of this series must not be overlooked. So far as now can be discovered no similar data concerning retail operations—one might almost say no factual data of any kind—have ever been published for the period before 1900."