A future businessman (from "The Financier" by Theodore Dreiser)

*Theodore Dreiser, the great American progressive writer, was born in a poor family in 1871. He began to work for his living when he was sixteen. He had a number of jobs, and at one time was a newspaper reporter. As a reporter he gained a wide experience of life, which was a great help to him when he took up novel-writing.  
Dreiser's literary career started in 1900 when "Sister Carrie" was published. In this novel and also in his later works, the writer exposed the true nature of American "democracy"  
Dreiser was deeply impressed by the Great October Socialist Revolution. In 1927—28 he visited the Soviet Union and from that time on was a true friend to our country. In 1945, at the age of 74, he joined the Communist Party of the USA.  
Dreiser died in 1945.  
The passage below comes from "The Financier" Frank Cowperwood at thirteen is shown as a boy who is already fully aware of the power of money. Later on he becomes a typical capitalist who stops at nothing to become rich and powerful.*  
  
Buttonwood Street, Philadelphia, where Frank Cowperwood spent the first ten years of his life, was a lovely place for a boy to live in. There were mainly red brick houses there with small marble steps leading up to the front doors. There were trees in the street — a lot of them. Behind each house there was a garden with trees and grass and sometimes flowers.  
The Cowperwoods, father and mother, were happy with their children. Henry Cowperwood, the father of the family, started life as a bank clerk, but when Frank, his elder son, was ten, Henry Cowperwood became a teller at the bank.  
As his position grew more responsible, his business connections increased. He already knew a number of rich businessmen who dealt with the bank where he worked. The brokers knew him as representing a well-known film and considered him to be a most reliable person.  
Young Cowperwood took an interest in his father's progress. He was quite often allowed to come to the bank on Saturdays, when he would watch with great interest the quick exchange of bills. He wanted to know where all the different kinds of money came from, and what the men did with all the money they received. His father, pleased at his interest, was glad to explain, so that even at this early age — from ten to fifteen — the boy gained a wide knowledge of the condition of the country financially. He was also interested in stocks and bonds, and he learned that some stocks and bonds were not even worth the paper they were written on, and others were worth much more than their face value showed.  
At home also he listened to considerable talk of business and financial adventure.  
Frank realized that his father was too honest, too careful. He often told himself that when he grew up, he was going to be a broker, or a financier, or a banker, and do some of the risky things he so often used to hear about.  
Just at this time there came to the Cowperwoods an uncle, Seneca Davis, who had not appeared in the life of the family before.  
Henry Cowperwood was pleased at the arrival of this rather rich relative, for before that Seneca Davis had not taken much notice of Henry Cowperwood and his family.  
This time, however, he showed much more interest in the Cowperwoods, particularly in Frank.  
"How would you like to come down to Cuba and be a planter, my boy?" he asked him once.  
"I am not so sure that I'd like to," replied the boy.  
"Well, that's frank enough. What have you against it?"  
"Nothing, except that I don't know anything about it."  
"What do you know?" The boy smiled, "Not very much, I guess."  
"Well, what are you interested in?"  
"Money."  
He looked at Frank carefully now. There was something in the boy ... no doubt of it.  
"A smart boy!" he said to Henry, his brother-in-law. "You have a good family."  
Uncle Seneca became a frequent visitor to the house and took an increasing interest in Frank.  
"Keep in touch with me," he said to his sister one day. "When that boy gets old enough to find out what he wants to do, I think I'll help him to do it." She told him she was very grateful. He talked to Frank about his studies, and found that the boy took little interest in books or most of the subjects he had to take at school.  
"I like book-keeping and mathematics," he said. "I want to get out and get to work, though. That's what I want to do."  
"You're very young, my son," his uncle said. "You're only how old now? Fourteen?"  
"Thirteen."  
"Well, you can't leave school much before sixteen. You'll do better if you stay until seventeen or eighteen. It can't do you any harm. You won't be a boy again."  
"I don't want to be a boy. I want to get to work."  
"Don't go too fast, son. You'll be a man soon enough. You want to be a banker, don't you?"  
"Yes. sir."  
"Well, when the time comes, if everything is all right and you've behaved well and you still want to, I'll help you get a start in business. If you are going to be a banker, you must work with some good company a year or so. You'll get a good training there. And, meantime, keep your health and learn all you can."  
And with these words he gave the boy a ten-dollar gold piece with which to start a bank-account.

I am a painter. I like painting more than anything else, except obvious things like food and drink, that all sensible people like. As a painter, I have quite a lot of talent — I'm not sure yet how much — and a fairly complete mastery of most of the technical requirements; that is, I am an instinctive colourist, and my composition is interesting.  
I have my difficulties, but who does not? I get on fairly well with people, and I ought to be quite as successful as a dozen other painters — but I am not. I never have been since my very first one-man show, when I was discovered by the critics, taken up — and very quickly put down again — and sold out.  
"Sold out" is the just phrase. I was twenty-two after that show. Apart from quite a lot of money, the way I understand it, I had one oil painting left, three drawings, and very little common sense, my most valuable remaining possession. The common sense prevented me from believing what the critics said and considering myself a genius, and not only a genius but a painter who would always be able to live by painting exactly what he wanted to paint when he wanted to paint it.  
I did, however, think that I could probably afford to marry Leila, rent my own studio, and stop being a student.  
But I have never had another show which sold like that first one, although I am a better painter than I was then. My work is as contemporary as any; of course it is; how can anyone intelligent and honest paint behind his time, deliberately or by accident? But more and more critics support what is called Action Painting and Other Art, when a painter is trying to be as different from anyone else as he can. Anyway, it has been clear ever since that first sell-out show that I have an old way of seeing things and am really an academic.  
My second show went fairly well because Other Art had not then got very far. But ever since. Not that I don't sell a certain amount privately. I do. To the uneducated and even the half-educated my work seems to give a good deal of pleasure.  
However, in the last two years things have got very tight.  
We can't pay the quarter's rent and we can't afford not to, so something had to be done. So my applying for a most unpleasant job which my uncle could give me. I got it. Start next Monday.  
When I got back from the interview, Leila was sitting in the studio, which she seldom does, as it was a working-room entirely. She said, "Hi, Bill. You'll never guess what's happened."  
I thought it was something awful because she hadn't even asked me about the job. I said, "What?"  
"Garrard came — just before lunch." Garrard is my dealer, and I'd been trying to get him to come and look at my work and arrange for a show for the last year. Dealers!  
I sat down and asked Leila what he wanted.  
"He came because there's a Mrs. Spencer Thompson who's interested in having you paint a small portrait of her daughter. She's American and very rich and she wants you to paint it."  
"Very nice of her. She must have seen one of the early portraits. Did you make Garrard look at the work? Did he say anything about a show?"  
Leila went bright pink and opened her eyes much too wide as she does when she's surprised. She said, "It's the most extraordinary thing. It's really awfully funny, I suppose, but I think you'll be furious. I was just cleaning up in here a bit as you were out".  
I said, "I wish you wouldn't. The still life on the easel's wet — it doesn't want a lot of dust sticking to the surface."  
This is what I always say when Leila cleans the studio, and while I was saying it I looked round for the first time. The studio has a parquet floor, and to protect it I have a large piece of hardboard in front of my easel to catch the worst drips of paint.  
Now the piece was on the easel and my still life was leaning against the wall.  
I said, "Good God! What on earth? Leila!" and jumped up to take it off the easel and throw it on the floor again and make sure my Jars in a Window — which was coming along rather well — was all right.  
Leila jumped up too and stood between me and the easel.  
"Bill, listen a minute. It's Garrard. Not me. Of course I wouldn't."  
"Garrard? What do you mean?"  
"He was looking at the pictures explaining how the gallery was booked up for a year and how he couldn't really promise you a show till next year and saying, "Mm," to each picture instead of "Ah," like he does when he likes them, and suddenly he saw the hardboard leaning against the wall."  
"What was it doing there?"  
"I told you, I was cleaning. I'd picked it up to sweep underneath it." He said, "Ah," at once, and then he stepped back and said, "Ah ha!" with his head on one side.  
"And then he turned to me and said, "Leila, my dear, I'm very glad to have this opportunity to talk to you with Bill not here. I thought — I felt — that there must be something like this. Tell me — why is he holding out on us?"  
I saw it all, but I couldn't really believe it.  
"He didn't really think it was an abstract?"  
"He did. He not only thought it was an abstract, he thought it was wonderful. He said he'd always known you had it in you, as soon as you caught up with contemporary thought. That was why he'd never worried you, and always tried to help us keep going. You can't hurry genius. And he'd known you were that ever since he gave you your first show."  
We rocked with laughter. I moved to take the board off the easel again.  
Leila held my arm. "Listen, Bill. He wants to buy it."  
"Buy it? Didn't you tell him?"  
She opened her eyes again. "No, I didn't. I couldn't really. I suppose I should have, but it would have made him look too silly. He'd have hated us for ever after." I just said I didn't think you'd sell it."  
"I sure won't. It's top absurd."  
She began to dance, quoting Garrard. "And now, Leila, my dear, show me the rest. Is there enough for a full show? When did this start?"  
"No!"  
"Yes, I tell you. So I said — I'm sorry, Bill, but I couldn't think what to do — that you did not want to talk about them and had told me not to let anyone see them, but I'd tell you what he said." 110  
He said, "I'll ring him up this afternoon. Leila, my dear, I must go now, but I want you to know how splendid, how really splendid, this development is in your husband's work, I'm sure you do know, because you're one of the intelligent wives. Tell me, how many paintings are there?"  
"I said I didn't know." And he sighed and said, "Ah, well. He ought to be able to manage a show next spring at the latest. Tell him I'll be ringing him, and tell him not to waste time with the portrait. It's not worth his while. And this one — if he wants to part with it, I'll buy it myself. That'll show him what I think of the new work. That's absolutely accurate word for word reporting, Bill. I've been sitting here going over it to make sure I wasn't mad or anything."  
We were both quite silent and serious for a minute as we thought about it. I stood in front of the easel and looked at the board carefully.  
I remembered that I'd been reading something about Action Painting in America at breakfast yesterday and when I came in to the studio I was, I thought, in the necessary emotional condition, it was anger and a sort of despair.  
So I threw a lump of crimson, the colour of anger, down on to the board. And then I threw down a lump of lemon chrome and stamped on it.  
And then I was ashamed of myself for being so childish, and anyway that is not the way one wastes good paint, which is expensive. So I went on with my Jars in a Window, feeling tired and sad.  
But you see, it meant that the board on the floor wasn't entirely an accident. Some kind of emotional purpose had gone into it. Which is what the action painters claim. And perhaps Garrard had felt it — perhaps it does communicate...  
Leila doesn't know about this.  
So now what shall I do? What a thing to find lying in wait for you on your return from taking a white-collar job at eleven pounds a week. Because this board is big, forty inches by fifty. Even at my present prices, I shouldn't sell for under three hundred, Garrard knows that. I could probably get four out of him. And I can't paint him thirty more for an exhibition.  
I could, of course. I could paint six by this evening and show them to him tomorrow.  
And they might be very interesting and surprising if they conveyed the mixture of emotions I feel at this moment.