

**Theodore Dreiser**

# The Titan

 *Lingua*



## CHAPTER I

### THE NEW CITY

When Frank Algernon Cowperwood emerged from the Eastern District Penitentiary in Philadelphia he realized that the old life he had lived in that city since boyhood was ended. His youth was gone, and with it had been lost the great business prospects of his earlier manhood. He must begin again.

It would be useless to repeat how a second panic following upon a tremendous failure — that of Jay Cooke & Co. — had placed a second fortune in his hands. This restored wealth softened him in some degree. Fate seemed to have his personal welfare in charge. He was sick of the stock-exchange, anyhow, as a means of livelihood, and now decided that he would leave it once and for all. He would get in something else — street-railways, land deals, some of the boundless opportunities of the far West. Philadelphia was no longer pleasing to him. Though now free and rich, he was still a scandal to the pretenders, and the financial and social world was not prepared to accept him. He must go his way alone, unaided, or only secretly so, while his quondam friends watched his career from afar. So, thinking of this, he took the train one day, his charming mistress, now only twenty-six, coming to the station to see him off. He looked at her quite tenderly, for she was the quintessence of a certain type of feminine beauty.

“By-by, dearie,” he smiled, as the train-bell signaled the approaching departure. “You and I will get out of this shortly. Don’t grieve. I’ll be back in two or three weeks, or I’ll send for you. I’d take you now, only I don’t know how that country is out there. We’ll fix on some place, and then you watch me settle this fortune question. We’ll not live under a cloud always. I’ll get a divorce, and we’ll marry, and things will come right with a bang. Money will do that.”

He looked at her with his large, cool, penetrating eyes, and she clasped his cheeks between her hands.

“Oh, Frank,” she exclaimed, “I’ll miss you so! You’re all I have.”

“In two weeks,” he smiled, as the train began to move, “I’ll wire or be back. Be good, sweet.”

She followed him with adoring eyes — a fool of love, a spoiled child, a family pet, amorous, eager, affectionate, the type so strong a man would naturally like — she tossed her pretty red gold head and waved him a kiss. Then she walked away with rich, sinuous, healthy strides — the type that men turn to look after.

“That’s her — that’s that Butler girl,” observed one railroad clerk to another. “Gee! a man wouldn’t want anything better than that, would he?”

It was the spontaneous tribute that passion and envy invariably pay to health and beauty. On that pivot swings the world.

Never in all his life until this trip had Cowperwood been farther west than Pittsburg. His amazing commercial adventures, brilliant as they were, had been almost exclusively confined to the dull, staid world of Philadelphia, with its sweet refinement in sections, its pretensions to American social supremacy, its cool arrogation of traditional leadership in commercial life, its history, conservative wealth, unctuous respectability, and all the tastes and avocations which these imply. He had, as he recalled, almost mastered that pretty

world and made its sacred precincts his own when the crash came. Practically he had been admitted. Now he was an Ishmael, an ex-convict, albeit a millionaire. But wait! The race is to the swift, he said to himself over and over. Yes, and the battle is to the strong. He would test whether the world would trample him under foot or no.

Chicago, when it finally dawned on him, came with a rush on the second morning. He had spent two nights in the gaudy Pullman then provided — a car intended to make up for some of the inconveniences of its arrangements by an over-elaboration of plush and tortured glass — when the first lone outposts of the prairie metropolis began to appear. The side-tracks along the road-bed over which he was speeding became more and more numerous, the telegraph-poles more and more hung with arms and strung smoky-thick with wires. In the far distance, cityward, was, here and there, a lone working-man's cottage, the home of some adventurous soul who had planted his bare hut thus far out in order to reap the small but certain advantage which the growth of the city would bring.

The land was flat — as flat as a table — with a waning growth of brown grass left over from the previous year, and stirring faintly in the morning breeze. Underneath were signs of the new green — the New Year's flag of its disposition. For some reason a crystalline atmosphere enfolded the distant hazy outlines of the city, holding the latter like a fly in amber and giving it an artistic subtlety which touched him. Already a devotee of art, ambitious for connoisseurship, who had had his joy, training, and sorrow out of the collection he had made and lost in Philadelphia, he appreciated almost every suggestion of a delightful picture in nature.

The tracks, side by side, were becoming more and more numerous. Freight-cars were assembled here by thousands from all parts of the country — yellow, red, blue, green, white. (Chicago, he recalled, already had thirty railroads

terminating here, as though it were the end of the world.) The little low one and two story houses, quite new as to wood, were frequently unpainted and already smoky — in places grimy. At grade-crossings, where ambling street-cars and wagons and muddy-wheeled buggies waited, he noted how flat the streets were, how unpaved, how sidewalks went up and down rhythmically — here a flight of steps, a veritable platform before a house, there a long stretch of boards laid flat on the mud of the prairie itself. What a city! Presently a branch of the filthy, arrogant, self-sufficient little Chicago River came into view, with its mass of sputtering tugs, its black, oily water, its tall, red, brown, and green grain-elevators, its immense black coal-pockets and yellowish-brown lumber-yards.

Here was life; he saw it at a flash. Here was a seething city in the making. There was something dynamic in the very air which appealed to his fancy. How different, for some reason, from Philadelphia! That was a stirring city, too. He had thought it wonderful at one time, quite a world; but this thing, while obviously infinitely worse, was better. It was more youthful, more hopeful. In a flare of morning sunlight pouring between two coal-pockets, and because the train had stopped to let a bridge swing and half a dozen great grain and lumber boats go by — a half-dozen in either direction — he saw a group of Irish stevedores idling on the bank of a lumber-yard whose wall skirted the water. Healthy men they were, in blue or red shirt-sleeves, stout straps about their waists, short pipes in their mouths, fine, hardy, nutty-brown specimens of humanity. Why were they so appealing, he asked himself. This raw, dirty town seemed naturally to compose itself into stirring artistic pictures. Why, it fairly sang! The world was young here. Life was doing something new. Perhaps he had better not go on to the Northwest at all; he would decide that question later.

In the mean time he had letters of introduction to distinguished Chicagoans, and these he would present. He wanted to talk to some bankers and grain and commission men. The stock-exchange of Chicago interested him, for the intricacies of that business he knew backward and forward, and some great grain transactions had been made here.

The train finally rolled past the shabby backs of houses into a long, shabbily covered series of platforms — sheds having only roofs — and amidst a clatter of trucks hauling trunks, and engines belching steam, and passengers hurrying to and fro he made his way out into Canal Street and hailed a waiting cab — one of a long line of vehicles that bespoke a metropolitan spirit. He had fixed on the Grand Pacific as the most important hotel — the one with the most social significance — and thither he asked to be driven. On the way he studied these streets as in the matter of art he would have studied a picture. The little yellow, blue, green, white, and brown street-cars which he saw trundling here and there, the tired, bony horses, jingling bells at their throats, touched him. They were flimsy affairs, these cars, merely highly varnished kindling-wood with bits of polished brass and glass stuck about them, but he realized what fortunes they portended if the city grew. Street-cars, he knew, were his natural vocation. Even more than stock-brokerage, even more than banking, even more than stock-organization he loved the thought of street-cars and the vast manipulative life it suggested.

## CHAPTER II

### A RECONNOITER

The city of Chicago, with whose development the personality of Frank Algernon Cowperwood was soon to be definitely linked! To whom may the laurels as laureate of this Florence of the West yet fall? This singing flame of a city,

this all America, this poet in chaps and buckskin, this rude, raw Titan, this Burns of a city! By its shimmering lake it lay, a king of shreds and patches, a maundering yokel with an epic in its mouth, a tramp, a hobo among cities, with the grip of Caesar in its mind, the dramatic force of Euripides in its soul. A very bard of a city this, singing of high deeds and high hopes, its heavy brogans buried deep in the mire of circumstance. Take Athens, oh, Greece! Italy, do you keep Rome! This was the Babylon, the Troy, the Nineveh of a younger day. Here came the gaping West and the hopeful East to see. Here hungry men, raw from the shops and fields, idyls and romances in their minds, builded them an empire crying glory in the mud.

From New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine had come a strange company, earnest, patient, determined, un-schooled in even the primer of refinement, hungry for something the significance of which, when they had it, they could not even guess, anxious to be called great, determined so to be without ever knowing how. Here came the dreamy gentleman of the South, robbed of his patrimony; the hopeful student of Yale and Harvard and Princeton; the enfranchised miner of California and the Rockies, his bags of gold and silver in his hands. Here was already the bewildered foreigner, an alien speech confounding him — the Hun, the Pole, the Swede, the German, the Russian — seeking his homely colonies, fearing his neighbor of another race.

Here was the negro, the prostitute, the blackleg, the gambler, the romantic adventurer *par excellence*. A city with but a handful of the native-born; a city packed to the doors with all the riffraff of a thousand towns. Flaring were the lights of the bagnio; tinkling the banjos, zithers, mandolins of the so-called gin-mill; all the dreams and the brutality of the day seemed gathered to rejoice (and rejoice they did) in this new-found wonder of a metropolitan life in the West.

The first prominent Chicagoan whom Cowperwood sought out was the president of the Lake City National Bank, the largest financial organization in the city, with deposits of over fourteen million dollars. It was located in Dearborn Street, at Munroe, but a block or two from his hotel.

“Find out who that man is,” ordered Mr. Judah Addison, the president of the bank, on seeing him enter the president’s private waiting-room.

Mr. Addison’s office was so arranged with glass windows that he could, by craning his neck, see all who entered his reception-room before they saw him, and he had been struck by Cowperwood’s face and force. Long familiarity with the banking world and with great affairs generally had given a rich finish to the ease and force which the latter naturally possessed. He looked strangely replete for a man of thirty-six — suave, steady, incisive, with eyes as fine as those of a Newfoundland or a Collie and as innocent and winsome. They were wonderful eyes, soft and spring-like at times, glowing with a rich, human understanding which on the instant could harden and flash lightning. Deceptive eyes, unreadable, but alluring alike to men and to women in all walks and conditions of life.

The secretary addressed came back with Cowperwood’s letter of introduction, and immediately Cowperwood followed.

Mr. Addison instinctively arose — a thing he did not always do. “I’m pleased to meet you, Mr. Cowperwood,” he said, politely. “I saw you come in just now. You see how I keep my windows here, so as to spy out the country. Sit down. You wouldn’t like an apple, would you?” He opened a left-hand drawer, producing several polished red winesaps, one of which he held out. “I always eat one about this time in the morning.”

“Thank you, no,” replied Cowperwood, pleasantly, estimating as he did so his host’s temperament and mental caliber. “I never eat between meals, but I appreciate your

kindness. I am just passing through Chicago, and I thought I would present this letter now rather than later. I thought you might tell me a little about the city from an investment point of view.”

As Cowperwood talked, Addison, a short, heavy, rubicund man with grayish-brown sideburns extending to his ear-lobes and hard, bright, twinkling gray eyes — a proud, happy, self-sufficient man — munched his apple and contemplated Cowperwood. As is so often the case in life, he frequently liked or disliked people on sight, and he prided himself on his judgment of men. Almost foolishly, for one so conservative, he was taken with Cowperwood — a man immensely his superior — not because of the Drexel letter, which spoke of the latter’s “undoubted financial genius” and the advantage it would be to Chicago to have him settle there, but because of the swimming wonder of his eyes. Cowperwood’s personality, while maintaining an unbroken outward reserve, breathed a tremendous humanness which touched his fellow-banker. Both men were in their way walking enigmas, the Philadelphian far the subtler of the two. Addison was ostensibly a church-member, a model citizen; he represented a point of view to which Cowperwood would never have stooped. Both men were ruthless after their fashion, avid of a physical life; but Addison was the weaker in that he was still afraid — very much afraid — of what life might do to him. The man before him had no sense of fear. Addison contributed judiciously to charity, subscribed outwardly to a dull social routine, pretended to love his wife, of whom he was weary, and took his human pleasure secretly. The man before him subscribed to nothing, refused to talk save to intimates, whom he controlled spiritually, and did as he pleased.

“Why, I’ll tell you, Mr. Cowperwood,” Addison replied. “We people out here in Chicago think so well of ourselves that sometimes we’re afraid to say all we think for fear of

appearing a little extravagant. We're like the youngest son in the family that knows he can lick all the others, but doesn't want to do it — not just yet. We're not as handsome as we might be — did you ever see a growing boy that was? — but we're absolutely sure that we're going to be. Our pants and shoes and coat and hat get too small for us every six months, and so we don't look very fashionable, but there are big, strong, hard muscles and bones underneath, Mr. Cowperwood, as you'll discover when you get to looking around. Then you won't mind the clothes so much."

Mr. Addison's round, frank eyes narrowed and hardened for a moment. A kind of metallic hardness came into his voice. Cowperwood could see that he was honestly enamoured of his adopted city. Chicago was his most beloved mistress. A moment later the flesh about his eyes crinkled, his mouth softened, and he smiled. "I'll be glad to tell you anything I can," he went on. "There are a lot of interesting things to tell."

Cowperwood beamed back on him encouragingly. He inquired after the condition of one industry and another, one trade or profession and another. This was somewhat different from the atmosphere which prevailed in Philadelphia — more breezy and generous. The tendency to expatiate and make much of local advantages was Western. He liked it, however, as one aspect of life, whether he chose to share in it or not. It was favorable to his own future. He had a prison record to live down; a wife and two children to get rid of — in the legal sense, at least (he had no desire to rid himself of financial obligation toward them). It would take some such loose, enthusiastic Western attitude to forgive in him the strength and freedom with which he ignored and refused to accept for himself current convention. *I satisfy myself* was his private law, but so to do he must assuage and control the prejudices of other men. He felt that this banker, while not putty in his hands, was inclined to a strong and useful friendship.

“My impressions of the city are entirely favorable, Mr. Addison,” he said, after a time, though he inwardly admitted to himself that this was not entirely true; he was not sure whether he could bring himself ultimately to live in so excavated and scaffolded a world as this or not. “I only saw a portion of it coming in on the train. I like the snap of things. I believe Chicago has a future.”

“You came over the Fort Wayne, I presume,” replied Addison, loftily. “You saw the worst section. You must let me show you some of the best parts. By the way, where are you staying?”

“At the Grand Pacific.”

“How long will you be here?”

“Not more than a day or two.”

“Let me see,” and Mr. Addison drew out his watch. “I suppose you wouldn’t mind meeting a few of our leading men — and we have a little luncheon-room over at the Union League Club where we drop in now and then. If you’d care to do so, I’d like to have you come along with me at one. We’re sure to find a few of them — some of our lawyers, business men, and judges.”

“That will be fine,” said the Philadelphian, simply. “You’re more than generous. There are one or two other people I want to meet in between, and” — he arose and looked at his own watch — “I’ll find the Union Club. Where is the office of Arneel & Co.?”

At the mention of the great beef-packer, who was one of the bank’s heaviest depositors, Addison stirred slightly with approval. This young man, at least eight years his junior, looked to him like a future grand seigneur of finance.

At the Union Club, at this noontime luncheon, after talking with the portly, conservative, aggressive Arneel and the shrewd director of the stock-exchange, Cowperwood met a varied company of men ranging in age from thirty-five to sixty-five gathered about the board in a private dining-room

of heavily carved black walnut, with pictures of elder citizens of Chicago on the walls and an attempt at artistry in stained glass in the windows. There were short and long men, lean and stout, dark and blond men, with eyes and jaws which varied from those of the tiger, lynx, and bear to those of the fox, the tolerant mastiff, and the surly bulldog. There were no weaklings in this selected company.

Mr. Arneel and Mr. Addison Cowperwood approved of highly as shrewd, concentrated men. Another who interested him was Anson Merrill, a small, polite, *recherche* soul, suggesting mansions and footmen and remote luxury generally, who was pointed out by Addison as the famous dry-goods prince of that name, quite the leading merchant, in the retail and wholesale sense, in Chicago.

Still another was a Mr. Rambaud, pioneer railroad man, to whom Addison, smiling jocosely, observed: "Mr. Cowperwood is on from Philadelphia, Mr. Rambaud, trying to find out whether he wants to lose any money out here. Can't you sell him some of that bad land you have up in the Northwest?"

Rambaud — a spare, pale, black-bearded man of much force and exactness, dressed, as Cowperwood observed, in much better taste than some of the others — looked at Cowperwood shrewdly but in a gentlemanly, retiring way, with a gracious, enigmatic smile. He caught a glance in return which he could not possibly forget. The eyes of Cowperwood said more than any words ever could. Instead of jesting faintly Mr. Rambaud decided to explain some things about the Northwest. Perhaps this Philadelphian might be interested.

To a man who has gone through a great life struggle in one metropolis and tested all the phases of human duplicity, decency, sympathy, and chicanery in the controlling group of men that one invariably finds in every American city at least, the temperament and significance of another group in

another city is not so much, and yet it is. Long since Cowperwood had parted company with the idea that humanity at any angle or under any circumstances, climatic or otherwise, is in any way different. To him the most noteworthy characteristic of the human race was that it was strangely chemic, being anything or nothing, as the hour and the condition afforded. In his leisure moments — those free from practical calculation, which were not many — he often speculated as to what life really was. If he had not been a great financier and, above all, a marvelous organizer he might have become a highly individualistic philosopher — a calling which, if he had thought anything about it at all at this time, would have seemed rather trivial. His business as he saw it was with the material facts of life, or, rather, with those third and fourth degree theorems and syllogisms which control material things and so represent wealth. He was here to deal with the great general needs of the Middle West — to seize upon, if he might, certain well-springs of wealth and power and rise to recognized authority. In his morning talks he had learned of the extent and character of the stock-yards' enterprises, of the great railroad and ship interests, of the tremendous rising importance of real estate, grain speculation, the hotel business, the hardware business. He had learned of universal manufacturing companies — one that made cars, another elevators, another binders, another windmills, another engines. Apparently, any new industry seemed to do well in Chicago. In his talk with the one director of the Board of Trade to whom he had a letter he had learned that few, if any, local stocks were dealt in on 'change. Wheat, corn, and grains of all kinds were principally speculated in. The big stocks of the East were gambled in by way of leased wires on the New York Stock Exchange — not otherwise.

As he looked at these men, all pleasantly civil, all general in their remarks, each safely keeping his vast plans under his

vest, Cowperwood wondered how he would fare in this community. There were such difficult things ahead of him to do. No one of these men, all of whom were in their commercial-social way agreeable, knew that he had only recently been in the penitentiary. How much difference would that make in their attitude? No one of them knew that, although he was married and had two children, he was planning to divorce his wife and marry the girl who had appropriated to herself the role which his wife had once played.

“Are you seriously contemplating looking into the Northwest?” asked Mr. Rambaud, interestedly, toward the close of the luncheon.

“That is my present plan after I finish here. I thought I’d take a short run up there.”

“Let me put you in touch with an interesting party that is going as far as Fargo and Duluth. There is a private car leaving Thursday, most of them citizens of Chicago, but some Easterners. I would be glad to have you join us. I am going as far as Minneapolis.”

Cowperwood thanked him and accepted. a long conversation followed about the Northwest, its timber, wheat, land sales, cattle, and possible manufacturing plants.

What Fargo, Minneapolis, and Duluth were to be civically and financially were the chief topics of conversation. Naturally, Mr. Rambaud, having under his direction vast railroad lines which penetrated this region, was confident of the future of it. Cowperwood gathered it all, almost by instinct. Gas, street-railways, land speculations, banks, wherever located, were his chief thoughts.

Finally he left the club to keep his other appointments, but something of his personality remained behind him. Mr. Addison and Mr. Rambaud, among others, were sincerely convinced that he was one of the most interesting men they had met in years. And he scarcely had said anything at all — just listened.