21 September 1955

Mother reads *The Great Secret: The Writer.*

*Sweet Mother, here it is written:* “The word is sufficiently immaterial to be in contact with subtle things, forces and vibrations, principles and ideas.”

My children, I have to tell you to begin with that this is “literature”. So you should not ask me for explanations. It is a literary way of speaking, you must understand it in a literary way; it is a literary description of the word; it is very precise, but it is literary. So I cannot produce literature on this literature. One must have the taste for forms, for a beautiful way of saying things, a little exceptional, not too banal; but it is just one way, it’s a way of saying things which is charming. Literature exists completely in the way of saying things. You catch what you can of what’s behind. If you are indeed open to the literary meaning, it evokes things for you; but it cannot be explained. It is a means of evocation which corresponds also with music. Naturally, one can analyse literature and see how the sentence is constructed, but this is like your changing a human being into a skeleton. It is not pretty, a skeleton. It’s the same thing. If in music you study counterpoint, and if this note must necessarily bring in this other, and this group of notes has necessarily to bring in that one, you spoil the music too, you make a skeleton of the music; it is not interesting. These things have to be felt with the corresponding senses, the charm of the phrase with the literary sense — catching the harmony of words and what it evokes.

In each one of these persons it is the same thing: you are given a description of people who have reached the highest human possibility. It is obvious that this Writer is a very great one, the best that can be conceived. Well, he has come to this.
And then at last he has realised that it was hollow, that he lacked the essential thing. And for all it will be the same experience.

Last time we said that it was an exceptional Statesman. Well, we can say this time that it is an exceptional Writer who has reached the psychological point where he can awaken to another consciousness, a higher consciousness. And yet the description he gives is truly that of the highest human possibilities. He did not see things as they are, lifeless, he saw the spirit which was behind, he communicated with it, he tried to express it and he made... he went as far as a human consciousness can go. And then he found himself before a precipice. How to cross over to the other side? Everything is like that, you see. We shall have to repeat the same thing each time.

There, then.

No questions?

_Sweet Mother, how can literature help us to progress?_

It can help you to become more intelligent, to understand things better, to have a sense of literary forms, to cultivate your taste, to know how to choose between a good and a bad way of saying things, to enrich your spirit. It can help you in a hundred different ways.

There are many different kinds of progress. And if one wants to progress integrally, one must progress in all these different directions. Well, this one is an intellectual and artistic progress at the same time, in which both combine. One plays with ideas, is capable of understanding them, classifying them, organising them, and at the same time one plays with the form of these ideas, the way of expressing them, the way of saying, the way of presenting them and making them intelligible.

_Sweet Mother, all that we read in literature — stories, novels, etc. — very often contains stuff which lowers our consciousness. It is not altogether possible to leave out_
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*the matter and read only from the point of view of the literary value.*

You see, there is no excuse for reading any odd novels except when they are remarkably written and you want to learn the language — if they are written either in your own language or in another one and you want to study this language, then you may read anything at all provided that it is well written. It's not what is said that's interesting, it's the way of saying it. And so the way to read it is exactly to be concerned only with the way it has been said, and not with what is said, which is uninteresting. Only, for instance, in a book, there are always descriptions; well, you see how these descriptions are made and how the author has chosen the words to express things. And for ideas it is the same thing: how he has made his characters speak; you take no interest in what they say but in how they say it. If you take certain books like study books, to learn just how to write sentences well and express things as you should, because these books are very well written, what the story is has not much importance. But if you start reading books for what they narrate, then in that case you must be much stricter and not take things which darken your consciousness, because that's a waste of time; it's worse than a waste of time. So, things like vulgar stories which are written in a vulgar way, about these, you see, there's no longer any question. These things you should never touch. And yet this is the currency which circulates everywhere, above all in our times, it seems, because men have invented methods for cheap printing, for making cheap illustrations. So they flood the country and all other countries with worthless literature, which is badly written, ill-conceived, and which expresses vulgar things and coarsens you with vulgar ideas and completely spoils your taste through vulgar pictures. All this happens because from the point of view of production they succeed in making things very cheap, what are called popular editions “accessible to all”. But as the aim of these people is not at all either to educate or to
help men to progress, far from that — they hope on the contrary that people don’t progress, because if they did they would no longer buy their wares — so their intention is to make money at the expense of those who read their literature, and so the more it sells, the better it is. It may be frightful, but it’s very good if it sells well. It’s the same thing with art, the same thing with music, the same thing with drama.

The latest scientific discoveries, applied to life, have put within the reach of everyone all kinds of things which formerly were reserved only for the intellectual and artistic élite; and to justify their effort and profit by their work, they have made things which can sell most, that is, the lowest, most ordinary, most vulgar things, the easiest to understand because they require no effort and no education. And the whole world is drowned under these things, to such an extent that when there’s someone who has written a good book or a fine play, there is no longer any place for him anywhere, because the whole place has been taken up by these things.

Naturally there are sensible people who try to react; but it is very difficult. First of all the commercial mentality should be driven out from the world. This will take some time. There are a few signs that it is perhaps less respected than before. There was a time when, you see, one was considered a criminal if he didn’t know how to do business, and he who had the audacity to spend his capital, even for very good things, was fit to be sent to a madhouse. It is a little better now, but still we are quite far from the real situation; there is yet the golden calf, there, reigning over the world; before it is pulled down some time will yet go by, I am afraid. This has so perverted men’s mind, that it is for them the criterion. You see, in America when someone is spoken about, it is said: “He, oh, he is worth a million dollars!” This indeed is the greatest compliment one can pay. And it is this: someone asks, “Do you know this person? What is he worth?” — “He is worth a hundred thousand dollars”, “He is worth five hundred dollars.” So this means that he has a position which
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brings him this. “Is he intelligent, is he stupid? Is he...” This is not at all important. “Is he a good man or a bad one?” That makes no difference at all! “Is he a rich man or a poor one?” If he is rich, ah, ah! “I would like to know him very much! If he is poor, I have nothing to do with him.” There! Naturally America is a young country, so its ways are those of a child, but of a fairly ill-bred child. But the older countries have become too old and can no longer react, they shake their heads and wonder if after all this youth is not right. Everything is like that. The world is very ill.

That’s all.

Sweet Mother, how should one choose one’s books?

It would be better to ask someone who knows. If you ask someone who, at least, has taste and some knowledge of literature, he won’t make you read badly written books. Now, if you want to read something which helps you from the spiritual point of view, that’s another matter, you must ask someone who has a spiritual realisation to help you.

You see, there are two very different lines; they can converge because everything can be made to converge; but as I said, there are two lines really very different. One is a perpetual choice, not only of what one reads but of what one does, of what one thinks, of all one’s activities, of strictly doing only what can help you on the spiritual path; it does not necessarily have to be very narrow and limited, but it must be on a little higher plane than the ordinary life, and with a concentration of will and aspiration which does not allow any wandering on the path, going here and there uselessly. This is austere; it is difficult to take up this when one is very young, because one feels that the instrument that he is has not been sufficiently formed or is not rich enough to be allowed to remain what it is without growing and progressing. So, generally speaking, except for a very small number, it comes later, after a certain development and some
experience of life. The other path is that of as complete, as
integral a development as possible of all human faculties, of all
that one carries in himself, all one’s possibilities, then, spreading
out as widely as possible in all directions, in order to fill one’s
consciousness with all human possibilities, to know the world
and life and men and their work as it now is, to create a vast
and rich base for the future ascent.

Usually this is what we expect of children; except as I said, in
absolutely rare, exceptional cases of children who have in them
a psychic being which has already had all the experiences before
incarnating this time, and no longer needs any more experiences,
which only wants to realise the Divine and live Him. But these,
you see, are one-in-a-million cases. Otherwise, till a certain age,
so long as one is very young, it is good to develop oneself, to
spread out as much as possible in all directions, to draw out
all the potentialities one holds, and turn them into expressed,
conscious, active things, so as to have a fairly solid foundation
for the ascent. Otherwise it is a bit poor.

That is why you must learn, love to learn, always learn, not
waste your time in... well, in filling yourself with useless things
or doing useless things. You must do everything with this aim,
to enrich your possibilities, develop those you have, acquire new
ones, and become as complete, as perfect a human being as you
can. That is, even on this line you must take things seriously,
not simply pass your time because you are here, and waste it as
much as possible because you have to pass it somehow.

That is the attitude of men in general: they come into life,
they don’t know why; they know that they will live a certain
number of years, they don’t know why; they think that they
will have to pass away because everybody passes away, and they
again don’t know why; and then, most of the time they are
bored because they have nothing in themselves, they are empty
beings and there is nothing more boring than emptiness; and
so they try to fill this by distraction, they become absolutely
useless, and when they reach the end they have wasted their
whole existence, all their possibilities — and everything is lost. This you will see: take a thousand men, out of them at least nine hundred and ninety are in this condition. It happens that they are born in certain circumstances or certain others, and they try, you see, to pass their time as well as they can, to be bored as little as possible, to suffer as little as possible, to have as good a time as possible; and everything is dull, lifeless, useless, stupid, and absolutely without any result. There, then. This is the majority of human beings, and they don’t even think... they don’t even ask themselves, “But indeed, why am I here? Why is there an earth? Why are there men? Why do I live?” No, all these things are absolutely uninteresting. The only interesting thing is to try to eat well, to have good fun, be nicely distracted, well married, have children, earn money and have all the advantages one can get from the point of view of desires, and above all, above all not think, not reflect, not ask any questions, and avoid all trouble. Yes, and then get out of it like that, without too many catastrophes. This is the general condition; this is what men call being reasonable. And in this way the world can turn round indefinitely for eternity, it will never progress. And this is why all these are like ants; they come, crawl, die, go away, come back, crawl again, die again, and so on. And it can last for eternities like this. Fortunately there are some who do the work of all the others, but it’s only these who will make everything change one day.

So the first problem is to know on which side one wants to be: on the side of those who are doing something or the side of those who do nothing; on the side of those who, perhaps, will be able to understand what life is and do what is necessary for this life to culminate in something, or else of those who hardly care to understand anything at all and try to pass their time in having as few botherations as possible. Above all, no botherations!

There we are. This is the first choice. After this there are many others.
21 September 1955

So there, my children.
Now, if you wish to have a meditation, say so. Yes or no?
Yes? Good! Try to eliminate from your consciousness all that is
darkly attached to living uselessly.