

*To Benjamin Marston Watson*

*December 31, 1852*

Concord Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> '52

Dear Sir,

I should be glad to visit Plymouth again, but at present I have nothing to read which is not too<sup>a</sup> merely heathenish, or at least secular,—which the dictionary defines—“relating to affairs of the present world, not holy;”<sup>1</sup>—though not necessarily unholy; nor have I any leisure to prepare it. My writing at present is prophane, yet in a good sense, and as it were sacredly, I may say; for finding the air of the temple too close, I sat outside.

Dont think that I say this to get off. No, no,—it will never do to read such things to hungry ears. If they ask for bread will ye give them a stone.<sup>2</sup>

When I have something of the right kind *depend upon it* I will let you know.<sup>3</sup>

Yrs

Henry D. Thoreau

*Correspondent:* See pp. 97-98.

<sup>1</sup> T quotes part of the definition of “secular” from Samuel Johnson and John Walker’s *Dictionary of the English Language*; he owned a copy of the second edition, revised by R. S. Jameson and published in London in 1828.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 7:9; Luke 11:11.

<sup>3</sup> T lectured again in Plymouth on October 8, 1854; the subject was “Moonlight.” See p. 243.

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*Editor’s Note*

This letter is addressed “B. M. Watson Esq / Plymouth / Mass.” and postmarked “Concord Ms. Dec 31”.

*Author’s Alteration*

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