Grand Rapids, Mich.
May 12, 1887

To the President of the National Academy of Science,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir,

Three or four years ago your society received the small amount from the estate of Jas. C. Watson. You are doubtless aware that the munificent provision he made for his sister, 150 a year. His mother worked to support him while in the University as a student. The clothes he wore when he graduated were paid for by her, in work for the tailor, and during the whole course of his college life she did work for the tailors, in order to help to keep her son in the University. I can well remember her standing by her side, and of snuffing the tailors' candle, by which dim light she worked. I also remember that years after, her son had become prosperous, his mother was living in extreme poverty, and I have heard her say to him, with tears rolling down her old cheeks, that she had hoped she might see the day when she would have a place she could call her own, a home from which she would not be compelled to move.
In the face of all this he deliberately makes a will by which he provides an annuity of $150 for her support. That same old woman, the mother of Prof. Jas. C. Watson, may today be seen, an old woman, more than seventy years of age, walking all over this place, discharging the duties of city missionary for a charitable society, receiving twelve dollars a month for her services. She does this work in order that she may help to support herself, as she has only an income of $50 from her generous son.

I hope the small amount you received from his estate will be carefully guarded for a million of years, and then it may burst forth like a new star, to reflect the light of Jas. C. Watson's devotion to "our science," as he called it in his will.

I thought I would simply remind you of this fund, fearing it might have been entirely lost sight of.

Very truly,

Edward Watson