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# Royal Irish Academy.

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## LETTER OF LORD SANDON,

Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education,

*Dated 9th of February, 1876;*

WITH

## RESOLUTIONS THEREON

APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL, AND ADOPTED BY THE ACADEMY;

TOGETHER WITH

## A REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

IN RELATION TO THAT LETTER,

AND ON

- (1) A PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF THE ACADEMY WITH OTHER SOCIETIES IN DUBLIN;

AND

- (2) TRANSFER OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY GRANT IN AID OF THE ACADEMY FROM THE IRISH CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

WITH A

FURTHER REPORT OF THE COUNCIL,  
AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE ACADEMY THEREUPON.

DUBLIN:

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June, 1876.



## Royal Irish Academy.

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*Letter to the PRESIDENT of the ACADEMY from VISCOUNT SANDON, M. P., Vice-President of the Privy Council Committee on Education.*

“ SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT,

“ SOUTH KENSINGTON, S.W.,

“ 9th February, 1876.

“ SIR,

“ I have the honour to inform you that the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education have framed a scheme, which has met with the approval of Her Majesty's Government, for the purpose of augmenting and extending the facilities for Science and Art instruction in Ireland; and that their Lordships feel that they may look with confidence for the cordial support and co-operation of the Royal Dublin Society and of the Royal Irish Academy in those preliminary measures which are absolutely necessary to carry out a comprehensive plan, which they trust will be worthy of the metropolis of Ireland, and will tend to foster and develop the natural genius and taste of her people.

“ 2. From the representations which have been made to the Government as to the general wishes of the country; from the recommendations of the Commission, of which the Duke of Leinster—then the Marquis of Kildare—was Chairman in 1868; and from the evidence



given before that Commission, it appears that the time has now arrived when the wants of the community at large have outgrown the useful action of private societies, and when a thorough re-arrangement and consolidation of existing institutions have become essential as a condition precedent to further progress.

“3. With this view their Lordships propose to build, on a site adjacent to Leinster House, a Science and Art Museum for Ireland somewhat similar to that now existing in Edinburgh, for Scotland, and to remove the Natural History Museum to the same building, supplying it with funds and staff sufficient for its development into a National Museum of Natural History.

“4. The collections of the Geological Survey, and the Industrial collections still retained in the Royal College of Science, would be removed to the same building—the former collections remaining, during the continuance of the Survey, under its officers, for whom offices may probably be provided in Leinster House.

5. “The Library would be then transferred from Leinster House into the building now occupied by the Natural History Museum, and supplied with the funds and staff necessary to develop it into a Public National Library, under the superintendence of a Council of twelve Trustees, eight of whom would be nominated by the Royal Dublin Society and four by the Government. The officers of the Library would be appointed by the Council of Trustees; and as the members of the Royal Dublin Society would enjoy no greater privileges than the public generally, their present contribution to it would cease.

“6. The collections of the Royal Irish Academy would also be transferred to the Science and Art Museum; the officers at present in charge of them becoming officers of the Science and Art Department.

“7. The Science and Art Museum, which would thus be an entirely new Institution, having the same scope and object as the Science and Art Museum in Edinburgh, would be maintained and managed in a similar manner. Its collections would consist of purchases, for which an annual vote would be taken; of loans—especially from the South Kensington Museum; and, it may reasonably be hoped, of donations from public-spirited individuals in Ireland.

“8. It is believed that it would be most advisable to accommodate the Royal Irish Academy in Leinster House, where, after the removal



of the Library of the Royal Dublin Society, ample space may be found for both the Royal Dublin Society and the Royal Irish Academy, with well-adapted and dignified rooms for their meetings, and for the Library of the latter Society. They would also be in proximity to the very valuable and interesting artistic and scientific collections of the proposed National Museum, as well as to the National Library, which would then be centered upon this spot.

“ 9. The Art School would be made a special Metropolitan School, the Royal Dublin Society being relieved of their management of and contributions to it.

“ 10. In order to carry out the foregoing arrangements, and to afford to the State the requisite control over property and buildings upon which a large amount of public money is to be expended, it will be necessary to obtain an Act of Parliament amending the 17 and 18 Vict., c. xcix., and to vest all the buildings and land now held by the Royal Dublin Society in the Government—except the premises fronting on Kildare-place now used for the Agricultural Museum and Shows by the Royal Dublin Society—and to purchase, if possible, the fee-simple of such part of the property as is held on lease.

“ 11. These arrangements will necessarily entail the surrender by the Royal Dublin Society and the Royal Irish Academy, of some privileges which they now enjoy, and will deprive them of some of those functions which they have hitherto exercised; but the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education wish it to be distinctly understood that they in no way undervalue the eminent services which the Royal Dublin Society and the Royal Irish Academy have rendered to Ireland. They trust that those services may still be continued, for it may be observed, that the autonomy and functions of the Societies would be in no degree affected, except as provided in the foregoing; nor does this scheme in any way interfere with the aid in repairs, &c., now afforded to the Royal Dublin Society for the maintenance of its Agricultural Department; or with the grants to the Royal Irish Academy for Literary and Scientific research.

“ 12. Their Lordships further earnestly desire to retain the advantage of the assistance and authority which the continued co-operation of the Societies with the Government in this more extensive national undertaking would afford, and in order to aid them in the administration of the Science and Art Museum, the Natural History



Collections, and the Botanic Gardens, they propose to constitute a Board of Visitors consisting of twelve Members, four nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, five by the Royal Dublin Society, three by the Royal Irish Academy—the Members to be appointed for a limited time, but to be re-eligible—and a President to be elected annually by the Board. The duties of the Board of Visitors would be to make Annual Reports to the Science and Art Department, which should be laid before Parliament, on the condition, management, and requirements of the Museum, and to advise on points affecting the administration.

"13. The Science and Art Museum would be under a Director—an officer of the Science and Art Department directly responsible to it, as at Edinburgh—with a sufficient staff.

"14. The Natural History Museum would be under a Curator paid by the State, as at the present; but he would be appointed by, and responsible to, the Science and Art Department, and not to a Committee of the Royal Dublin Society. It is not necessary here to consider the exact relations of this officer to the Director of the Science and Art Museum, but they would probably be somewhat similar to those of the Curator of the Natural History Museum in Edinburgh to the Director of the Science and Art Museum.

"15. The Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, would be under a Curator paid by the State as at present; but he would be appointed by, and responsible to, the Science and Art Department.

"16. The Director of the Science and Art Museum would act as Accounting Officer for all the votes of public money, and would be the medium of communication with the Science and Art Department.

"17. Their Lordships trust that this communication will receive the early attention of your Society.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"SANDON.

"THE REV. THE PRESIDENT OF THE

"ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY,

"DAWSON-STREET, DUBLIN."

[NOTE.—A copy of this letter was simultaneously addressed to the Secretaries of the Royal Dublin Society.]



## RESOLUTIONS

*Approved by the COUNCIL, and adopted by the ACADEMY on the 6th of March, 1876, and forwarded as the Reply to the Letter of LORD SANDON.*

1. That the Royal Irish Academy, being desirous of co-operating with Her Majesty's Government on the measures necessary for the establishment of a National Science and Art Museum in Dublin, provided that the independence and usefulness of the Academy be not injuriously affected by such measures, is willing to consent to the transfer of its antiquarian collections, commonly known as its Museum, to the Government, upon the conditions—

(a). That the arrangement of the Museum, as well as the purchase of additions, shall continue to be conducted by the Academy, and that adequate provision shall be made for the continued acquisition of Irish antiquities which may hereafter be discovered or offered for sale.

(b). That the Museum of the Academy, together with such other Irish antiquities as may be added to it, shall be for ever kept apart from other collections, and be permanently maintained as a Museum of our national antiquities, no portion of its contents being ever removed from the city of Dublin, unless by permission given under the seal of the Academy.

(c). That the Academy shall be accountable, as at present, to Her Majesty's Treasury, through the Irish Government, for all sums voted by Parliament, and shall not be subject, in the conduct of its affairs, or the expenditure of its grants, to any control on the part of the Science and Art Department, or any of its officers.

2. That, considering the position which the Academy has long held, and will continue to hold, as the first scientific, literary, and antiquarian society of the country, the proportional representation proposed to be given to it on the Board of Visitors (sect. 12 of Lord Sandon's letter) is altogether inadequate; and the Academy further thinks that no paid official of the Science and Art Department should be eligible to act as a representative on the Board.

3. That there should be provided in the yearly estimates, as laid before Parliament, instead of the several sums now annually voted, a sum at least equal to what is at present voted, to enable the Academy to discharge more completely its functions as a scientific, literary, and antiquarian body, by making grants in aid of original research, by publishing the results of such researches, by maintaining a library specially adapted to assist learned investigation, and by editing and printing ancient Irish texts, &c.

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## Royal Irish Academy.

### REPORT OF COUNCIL.

At a special meeting of the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, held this day (22nd of May, 1876), it was resolved to report to the Academy at its meeting this evening, as follows:—

1. No communication has as yet been received from Government in reply to the Resolutions adopted by the Academy on the 6th of March last, upon the letter of Lord Sandon; but the following letter has been received from the Registrar of the Royal Dublin Society:—

“ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY, *Kildare-street*,  
“ 6th April, 1876.

“SIR,

“I am directed to acquaint you, for the information of the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, that a Deputation, appointed by the Council of this Society to confer with the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education, on the subject of Lord Sandon's letter of the 9th of February last, have submitted a Report of their interview, and they state that since their return they have received the letter of which the annexed is a copy.

“After the letter in question had been read, it was moved by Sir Arthur Guinness, Bart., M.P., seconded by Lord Powerscourt, and resolved:

“That the members of the Deputation which have returned from London be requested to communicate Major Donnelly's letter to the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, and endeavour to ascertain their views thereon.”



"I am, consequently, to add, that the Deputation will esteem it a favour if the Council of the Royal Irish Academy will kindly grant them an interview on some day in the latter part of the present month, as may be mutually convenient.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

"W. E. STEELE,

"Registrar.

"To the Secretary,

"Royal Irish Academy, Dawson-street."

[ENCLOSURE.]

"SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT,

"April 1st, 1876.

"MY DEAR DR. STEELE,

"After meeting the Deputation from the Royal Dublin Society last Wednesday, I submitted the following Memorandum to Lord Sandon:—

"I have had a long interview to-day with the Deputation from the Royal Dublin Society. It is evident that many difficulties would be removed if an amalgamation could be effected between the Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Dublin Society.

"The arrangement of such an amalgamation would be a matter entirely for the Societies, but it might tend to forward such a scheme if the gentlemen interested were assured that it met with your Lordship's approval, and that if the Societies are prepared to take the necessary steps, the Government would give them any aid in its power.

"Further, there is some possibility of an amalgamation of the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland with the Royal Dublin Society. If this were carried out, would the Government be prepared to provide for the Agricultural Shows in the Phoenix Park, and remove them from the present buildings beside Leinster House.'



"Lord Sandon has authorized me to give this assurance generally.

"Will you, therefore, kindly inform the Members of the Deputation of this. I should add, that I told Lord Sandon that if an amalgamation were effected, it would probably take the form of a new Society, with a limited number of Fellows, ordinary Members, and an Agricultural Section.

"I said nothing about this in the Memorandum, as it is of course a matter purely for the Societies to arrange.

"Under these circumstances I suppose the Deputation from the Royal Dublin Society would wish no further steps to be taken with reference to the questions they left for Lord Sandon, until we hear from you.

"Yours very faithfully,

(Signed)

"J. F. D. DONNELLY."

2. To this the following reply was sent at the instance of the Council of the Academy:—

"ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY, 19, *Dawson-street*,

"18th of April, 1876.

"SIR,

"I am directed by the Council of the Royal Irish Academy to forward to you a copy of the following Resolution passed by them at their last Meeting:—

"That the Council of the Royal Irish Academy are not prepared to recommend any amalgamation of the Royal Irish Academy with the Royal Dublin Society."

"And I am instructed to add, that it is the opinion of the Council that, under these circumstances, the interview with a Deputation from the Royal Dublin Society, proposed in your letter of the 6th inst., could lead to no useful result.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

"JOHN K. INGRAM,

"*Secretary of Council.*

"W. E. STEELE, Esq., M.D.,

"*Registrar, Royal Dublin Society.*"



3. The communication from the Royal Dublin Society being for the purpose of obtaining the opinion of the *Council*, and there being an expectation of an official reply to the Academy's Resolutions, the Council did not think it advisable as yet to report to the Academy on the correspondence with the Royal Dublin Society's Deputation.

4. They now, however, hasten to communicate to the Academy the following letter received from the Irish Government, with the enclosures herein :—

[N.B.—The figures in heavy type prefixed to the letters, indicate the chronological order in which they were written.]

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“ DUBLIN CASTLE,  
“ 17th May, 1876.

“ SIR,

“ I am directed by the Lord Lieutenant to transmit herewith, for the information of the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, copies of a letter and the enclosures referred to therein, which have been received from the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury, relative to the transfer of the charge of the Vote for the Royal Irish Academy to the Science and Art Department, London, and to request that in future all applications for issues of the grant may be made to the Committee of Council on Education, Science and Art Department, South Kensington, London, S. W.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

“ T. H. BURKE.

“ THE TREASURER, ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY,

“ 19, Dawson-street.”

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“ TREASURY CHAMBERS,  
“ 11th May, 1876.

“ SIR,

“ I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to transmit, for the information of His Grace the



Lord Lieutenant, the enclosed copy of correspondence\* which has passed between the Education Department and their Lordships, with respect to the proposed transfer of the charge of the vote for the Royal Irish Academy, from the Chief Secretary to the Education Department.

"I am to request that you will move His Grace to be so good as to give the necessary directions in the matter.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

"WILLIAM LAW.

"THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR IRELAND,

"*Irish Office.*"

\* Education Department to Treasury. Reply.

[1].

[COPY.]

"SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT,

"SOUTH KENSINGTON (S.W.)

"2nd May, 1876.

"SIR,

"With reference to the arrangements which the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education has made with the Chief Secretary for Ireland and Mr. W. H. Smith, I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education to request that you will move the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to transfer the vote for the Royal Irish Academy to the Science and Art Department, in accordance with the recommendation (Section 4, page xxxv.) of the Report of the Commissioners on the Science and Art Department in Ireland, 1869, and with a view of furthering the proposed amalgamation of the Science and Art Institutions in Dublin.

"I have, &c.,

(Signed),

"NORMAN MACLEOD.

"THE SECRETARY,

"H. M. Treasury, *Whitehall.*"



[ 2 ].

[COPY.]

" TREASURY CHAMBERS,

" 10th May, 1876.

" MY LORD,

"The Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury have had before them Mr. MacLeod's letter of the 2nd inst., requesting their Lordships to transfer the vote of the Royal Irish Academy to the Science and Art Department, in accordance with the recommendation of the Report of the Commission on the Science and Art Department in Ireland, 1869, and with a view of furthering the proposed amalgamation of the Science and Art Institutions in Dublin.

"I am to state in reply, that their Lordships are pleased to assent to this proposal, and they desire that the Education Department be considered as accounting for the vote, instead of the Chief Secretary, as heretofore, from and after the 1st April, 1876.

"A letter to this effect has been addressed to the Irish Government, with whom the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education should themselves communicate, with a view to the transfer of vouchers, and the settlement of any details that may arise in connexion with the change.

" I am, &amp;c.,

[No address.]

(Signed)

" WILLIAM LAW."

5. These communications having been taken into the consideration of the Council at their Meeting this day, it was unanimously Resolved:—

"That in the opinion of the Council an acquiescence in the transfer of the vote for the Royal Irish Academy to the Science and Art Department would be attended with consequences fatal to the independence, and highly detrimental to the usefulness, of the Academy."

6. The Council propose to print this Report, and circulate it amongst the Members of the Academy, with such further Report as the Council may think expedient, and to take the opinion of the Academy at a Special Meeting to be summoned for this day week—

(1). On the wisdom of the action the Council has taken in repudiating the scheme of amalgamation; and

(2). On the propriety of declining to acquiesce in the transfer of the accountability for the Parliamentary votes for the Academy from the Irish Government to the Education Department, South Kensington.



## FURTHER REPORT OF COUNCIL

*Presented to the ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY at the SPECIAL MEETING on  
Monday, the 29th of May, 1876.*

7. The Council have resolved by an all but unanimous vote that they cannot recommend any amalgamation with the Royal Dublin Society for the following reasons:—

The objects of the Royal Dublin Society, and of the Royal Irish Academy, are, and have always been, essentially different. The former Society was incorporated only to promote "Husbandry and other Useful Arts in Ireland," and has done much good service in those departments during its long and honorable career. The Academy, on the other hand, is a body chartered for the purpose of scientific, literary, and antiquarian research, quite apart from industrial ends or practical applications. The suggestion to amalgamate these bodies is, in principle, the same as would be a suggestion to amalgamate the Royal Society with the Society of Arts—a proposal which would probably not be received with favour by those bodies;—but the incongruity is still further increased by the singular idea of annexing to the projected new Society for Ireland an Agricultural Section.

But even if the objects of the Societies were less distinct, this Academy cannot afford to obliterate, by a change of its name and constitution, the honorable memories of a hundred years. Its title is associated with illustrious names, and with great discoveries; it is known through the civilized world by the circulation of its Transactions, and through the Honorary Members associated with it both in the United Kingdom and abroad; and stronger reasons than any yet assigned will be required to induce it to break with its past, and undertake the task of winning a character anew.

\* It must further be remembered that the proposal is to fuse the Academy, not with the Royal Dublin Society, as it once was, or even now is,—a body of large resources and with an important sphere of action,—but with that Society, deprived of nearly all the departments once connected with it, shorn of almost all its public functions, and reduced to a shadow of its former self.



8. Further, the Council have unanimously adopted a Resolution adverse to the transfer of the charge of the vote for the Royal Irish Academy from the Irish Government to the Science and Art Department, for the following reasons:—

The Department of Science and Art, like the Committee of Council, of which it is a branch, is a purely educational body. It has no concern with learned societies established for original research, scientific, literary, or archæological. In the present instance, for the first time it is sought to bring under its control, through the machinery of finance, a body of this kind. The Royal Society (London), and the Royal Society of Edinburgh—the two institutions most nearly analogous to our own—receive their grants direct from the Treasury. This Academy is entitled to the same freedom from the interference of the Science and Art Department, and would, in our opinion, be lowered in the estimation of the country by being subordinated to a Department whose proper business connects it, not with independent research, but with the humbler office of instruction in the practical sciences and industrial arts.

Though this Institution alone is directly affected by the present proposal, we think the attempt thus to enlarge the sphere of action of the Science and Art Department well deserves the attentive observation of similar Societies in England and Scotland. Were the Department a merely administrative body, without scientific pretensions or ambition, the subordination sought to be imposed on the Academy would be less open to objection. Learned societies cannot reasonably object to such governmental supervision as is necessary to secure grants of public money from being diverted from the purposes to which they may have been appropriated by Parliament. But it is to be feared that a department, which by its nature is connected with the teaching of science, would seek to exercise a sort of control over the work of such societies which would be fatal to their independence, and highly detrimental to their usefulness.

The Irish Government, both by its constitutional and its local position, is the natural, as well as the best-informed, guardian and protector of the body which represents the higher pursuits of learning in this country.

The Council deem it right to observe that the Commissioners on the Science and Art Department in Ireland, 1869, do not, in section 4, p. xxxv., of their Report, or elsewhere, recommend that the charge



of the vote for the Royal Irish Academy should be transferred to the Science and Art Department, as is stated in the letter from that Department to the Secretary of Her Majesty's Treasury, of the 2nd of May, 1876.

9. It may be said by some persons that, in opposing amalgamation with other Societies in Dublin, and in declining to become a branch of the South Kensington Establishment, the Academy would show a selfish inclination to stand in the way of the creation of a great Science and Art Museum for Ireland. This would be an entire misrepresentation. There is no excuse for confusing those questions with that of the transfer of our antiquarian collections to the Government. The Academy has distinctly declared its desire to co-operate in the establishment of such a National Museum, and its willingness to transfer these collections to the Government under reasonable conditions, similar to those conceded to the Scottish Society of Antiquaries. Had it, however, been understood that either the scheme of amalgamation, or subordination of the Academy to the Science and Art Department, was intended to form part of the Government plan, as communicated in Lord Sandon's letter, the Council could not have recommended the Academy to entertain the proposal at all.

10. The action which the Council recommend may, they are aware, be attended with serious consequences. But the issues involved appear to them to be of such high importance, that whilst fully impressed with the gravity of the crisis as possibly affecting the resources—if not the very existence of the Institution—they yet feel bound to advise the Academy :—

- (1) Not to accept the scheme of amalgamation with the Royal Dublin Society ; and
  - (2) Not to acquiesce in the transfer of the charge of its vote from the Irish Government to the Science and Art Department.
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## RESOLUTIONS

*Adopted by the ACADEMY at the MEETING on 29th May, 1876.*

The REV. SAMUEL HAUGHTON, M. D., D. C. L., F. R. S., F. T. C. D.,  
Vice-President, in the Chair.

I. That the further Report of the Council be received.

Passed on the proposition of JOHN KELLS INGRAM,  
Esq., LL. D., F. T. C. D., Secretary of Council.

II. That the Academy approves of the action taken by the Council  
in declining to entertain the proposed scheme of Amalgamation.

Proposed by the REV. DR. RUSSELL, President of the  
Royal College of St. Patrick, Maynooth.

Seconded by LORD VISCOUNT GOUGH.

III. That the Academy protests against the transfer from the  
Irish Government of the charge of the Academy's Parliamentary  
Grant, and declares its determination to forego all claim on the  
bounty of Parliament, rather than apply to the Science and Art  
Department of the Committee of Council on Education for any issue of  
its grant.

Proposed by the REV. DR. CARSON, S. F. T. C. D.

Seconded by MASTER PIGOT.

IV. That it be referred to the Council to take such measures as in  
its judgment will be best calculated to obtain for the Academy a with-  
drawal of the assent given by the Treasury Board to the transfer of the  
Academy's vote to the Education Department.

Proposed by the REV. GEORGE LONGFIELD, D. D., F. T. C. D.

Seconded by THOMAS HAYDEN, Esq., F. K. & Q. C. P. I.