

Charles Kean in Victoria: Touring Actors and Local Politics in 1864

ALAN HUGHES

When Charles and Ellen Kean visited Victoria in 1864, they were the most internationally celebrated "stars" in the English speaking theatre. The fact that they gave nine performances in that small colonial town is a matter of interest to historians of theatre on the west coast, but closer study reveals no apparent effect on the development of local theatre, its repertoire or prosperity. The fact of the Keans' financial success in Victoria may help, perhaps, to illustrate a colonial town's thirst for the culture of the homeland; but as theatre history, it dwells among trivia and curios. Nevertheless, the passage of such big fish through a diminutive pond did not fail to generate waves; and while the theatre stood unmoved, the ship of state may have rocked a little. This was a crucial time in the political life of the colony. Rival factions were manoeuvring for position. The Keans would automatically confer prestige upon any group or party which could publicly identify itself with them; and they brought an incurable politician in their entourage.

Charles Kean was the acknowledged head of his profession. Specializing in the classics, he acquired such a reputation for artistic and scholarly integrity that Queen Victoria appointed him to oversee her Windsor Theatricals, and for him she revived the Elizabethan office of Master of the Revels. The climax of his career was his management (1850-59) of the Princess' Theatre in London, esteemed but almost unprofitable. Upon relinquishing the management, the ageing Keans toured as a means of converting fame into the wherewithal to retire comfortably. By the autumn of 1862 they were wearing out their welcome in the British Provinces, but Civil War made America a poor alternative. Kean wrote to an old acquaintance, the Australian impresario George Selth Coppin, who booked engagements at Melbourne, Sydney and the gold diggings, which kept the Keans and their supporting actors in Australia from October 1863 to the following July. Encouraged by success, Coppin

arranged a booking in California and accompanied the Kean party on their eighty-four day journey to San Francisco.¹

Business was disappointing. They opened on 8 October 1864, and President Lincoln stood for re-election on 8 November. Drama could not compete with political hoopla, and on election night the box-office receipts were a miserable \$318.50.² Besides, for Americans the Keans lacked the nostalgic appeal which attracted British colonists. But nostalgia flowed abundantly in the little capital of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, where a column in the *British Colonist* "expressing a hope that these distinguished personages might be induced to pay Victoria a flying visit"³ brought the theatre manager hotfoot to the office of the editor, Leonard McClure.

Thomas Ward, the lessee and manager of the 600-seat Victoria Theatre, was born in Liverpool in 1799, but had made his career primarily in the United States; the resident company with which he opened his second Victoria season on 8 October came from San Francisco. The Keans were too big for him, he told McClure: they would cost at least \$500 a night, and the theatre could scarcely hold that much. Raise the prices, said the editor: "we hear gentlemen stating that they would be willing, sooner than lose the opportunity, to engage seats at \$5 a-night." The next day, William Sebright Green, a solicitor and businessman who claimed personal acquaintance with Kean, suggested the actor be invited as guest of the city, but no immediate action was taken. The next move was Ward's; he seems to have written to Coppin very promptly, for Victoria figured in the latter's plans by November. Official inaction must have made Ward nervous; at length he conveyed Coppin's terms to "a few gentlemen who felt an interest in the project," who called a meeting on 19 November to "decide upon the most desirable mode of assisting Mr. Ward in concluding an arrangement." A committee of twenty-one prominent citizens lent their names, and a sub-committee of nine was struck, to meet next day and take charge of sales, the equitable distribution of seats, and other practical planning.⁴

¹ John William Cole, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859); J. M. D. Hardwick, *Emigrant in Motley* (London: Rockliff, 1954); Alec Bagot, *Coppin the Great* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

² George Selth Coppin, MS Diary, 8 Nov. 1864, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (hereafter SLV); MS letters, 2-28 Oct. 1864, SLV.

³ 21 Oct. 1864.

⁴ Chad Evans, *Frontier Theatre* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1983), 46; *British Colonist*, 21-22 Oct.; 21 Nov.; 8 Dec. 1864; Coppin, MS letter, 1 Nov. 1864, SLV.

The Kean committee was a self-appointed elite, drawn from the press, politics and business. The four newspapers were all represented by their proprietors or editors; there were three MLAs, the mayor and one of the city council; and at least fifteen were businessmen, mostly "commission merchants" (importers) with offices on Wharf Street. Interlocking affiliations strengthened their homogeneity; many belonged to the Chamber of Commerce, at least eight were Masons, three were members of the St. Andrew's Society and four were executives of the Amateur Dramatic Association (but none acted).⁵

Three members were a little different. Acting Attorney-General Thomas Lett Wood was the only representative of the Colonial Civil Service and the Governor's Executive Council. As Surveyor-General, Joseph Despard Pemberton had been Wood's colleague until dismissed in November by the Governor. The Hon. Horace Douglas Lascelles was the only genuine gentleman, a "scion of the influential and noble Harewood family,"⁶ a rackets ex-naval officer from HMS *Forward* and probably a remittance-man. But while the aristocratic playboy had business connections,⁷ some of the bourgeois members of the Committee were less sedate than they seemed. In 1870 W. S. Green would "skedaddle" for points unknown, "just in time to avoid a criminal charge." At the time when the committee was being formed, its Hon. Secretary George Cruickshank resigned his post at the Bank of B.C., embezzling \$5,000 as he went. He was arrested in July 1865 but was acquitted on a plea of temporary insanity. He and Green both campaigned to have the Bible taught in schools.⁸

Until very recently, American domination of Victoria's economic life had made the place "an outpost of San Francisco."⁹ The fact that there were no Americans on the committee is significant of the rapid growth of British dominance in trade, a position which was cemented by the political powers which aliens, excluded from the franchise, lacked. Kean's visit was thus a symbol of the British colonists' aspirations, which were clearly expressed in an address which thanked Kean for his assistance in "laying upon a small scale . . . the foundation of a nation which we hope will grow to be a second England," and stressed the need "to cultivate

⁵ See table 1.

⁶ David Williams Higgins, *The Passing of a Race* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1905), 74.

⁷ He was the partner of J. J. Southgate (see table 1) in a number of enterprises.

⁸ *British Colonist*, 22 June 1870; 21-22 July 1865; 11 Feb. 1868; *North Pacific Times*, 12 Nov. 1864; *Weekly Chronicle*, 17 May 1864.

⁹ Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: Macmillan of Canada, 1964), 141.

TABLE 1

Kean Committee Members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Offices</i>	<i>Memberships</i>
Banks, John A.		U.K.	Merchant		Mason
*Bell, Alexander Dalrymple	1826-c96	U.K.	Commission, Merchant, Proprietor, <i>Vancouver Times</i>		St. Andrew's Soc.
Burnaby, Robert	1828-78	U.K.	Commission Merchant, Mining Speculator	MLA	Mason, Chamber of Commerce (Pres.), ADS† (Pres.)
*Cruickshank, George	— 1868	U.K.	Accountant, Money Broker, Real Estate Agent		Mason, St. Andrew's Soc. (V. Pres.), ADS (Treas.)
*Dickson, James D.		U.K.	Doctor	MLA, Acting Coroner	
Fell, James	1821-90	U.K.	Tea Merchant, Importer	City Council	Mechanics' Literary Institute (Committee)
*Franklin, Lumley	c1819-73	U.K.	Auctioneer, Real Estate Agent	(Brother is MLA)	Mason, ADS (Committee), Congregation Emmanuel
*Green, William Saunders Sebright		U.K.	Solicitor, Merchant, Speculator		
*Harries, Walford Arbouin	— 1881	U.K.	Merchant, co-proprietor, <i>Colonist</i> , Real Estate Agent		Mason, St. Andrew's Soc., ADS (Hon. Sec.)
Harris, Thomas	1816-84	U.K.	Butcher	Mayor	Mason, St. Andrew's Soc.
Higgins, David Williams	1834-1917	Nova Scotia	Publisher and Editor, <i>Chronicle</i>		

Lascelles, Hon. Horace Douglas	— 1869	U.K.	Naval Officer, Real Estate and Mining Speculator		
McKay, John G.		U.K.?	Wine Merchant		
Nathan, Henry Jr.	1842 —	U.K.	Commission Merchant		Mason, Congregation Emmanuel
Pemberton, Joseph Despard	1821-93	U.K.	Engineer	Surveyor-General	
Reinhart, Simon	—	Germany	Wine wholesaler, Hotelier?		Congregation Emmanuel
*Southgate, Joseph Johnson	— 1894	U.K.	Commission Merchant, Insurance Agent, Real Estate Speculator	MLA	Mason, Chamber of Commerce
*Sproat, Gilbert Malcolm	1834-1913	U.K.	Commission Merchant		St. Andrew's Soc. (Pres.), Mechanics' Literary Institute (V. Pres.)
Wallace, Charles W.	1837-91	U.K.	Commission Merchant		St. Andrew's Soc.
Wallace, George	— 1887	Ontario	Editor, <i>Evening Express</i>		
*Wood, Thomas Lett	c1820-1909	U.K.	Solicitor	MLC, Acting Attorney- General	

*Members of the sub-committee

†ADS: Amateur Dramatic Society

the literature and arts of our race" if the colonists hoped "to reproduce in the West a fac-simile of the civilization of the East," and to stimulate "a taste for intellectual pursuits . . . among all classes."¹⁰ Compare a Hudson's Bay official to Governor Douglas, in 1849: "the object of every system of colonization should be . . . to transfer to the new country whatever is most valuable and approved in the old so that society may, as far as possible, consist of the same classes united altogether by the same ties."¹¹

Conspicuously absent from the committee were the leading reform MLA, Amor de Cosmos, and his ally Leonard McClure, the editor of the *Colonist* who had suggested the Kean invitation in the first place. Were he and De Cosmos deliberately excluded? Certainly the committee was largely composed of their political foes. Any party which could "capture" the popular visitor would enhance its prestige and influence — but relative to whom? The colonial administration was virtually excluded too. If the committee meant to enlist Kean against the Governor, De Cosmos and McClure would applaud — unless they foresaw failure and backfire.

In his previous appointment to Western Australia, Governor Arthur Edward Kennedy won a reputation as an able, authoritarian administrator. The Colonial Office sent him to Vancouver Island to effect a union with British Columbia. Most of the Kean committee opposed union because it would end the free-port status which had made Victoria the entrepôt for both colonies: they were Wharf Street importers, who would be the first to suffer if tariffs were introduced. Arriving in March 1864, Kennedy blundered into a power-struggle between the Colonial Office and the Legislative Assembly. The issue was responsible government, the elected legislature using its control of the money-supply to impose its will on the executive. Setting aside their differences, Wharf Street free-porters joined unionist MLAs in voting to withhold the necessary funds for salaries (including Kennedy's) and for a suitable Government House.¹² Kennedy aggravated the situation by demanding unprecedented salaries for his senior civil servants.¹³ There was a good deal of bad feeling. The Governor resentfully took up residence in a

¹⁰ *Vancouver Times*, 23 December 1864.

¹¹ Quoted in Irene Elaine Robertson, *The Business Community and the Development of Victoria, 1858-1900* (unpublished MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1981), 17.

¹² James E. Hendrickson, ed. *Journals of the Colonial Legislatures of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1851-1871* (Victoria, PABC, 1980), I, xxxvi-vii.

¹³ Robert Louis Smith, *Governor Kennedy of Vancouver Island and the Politics of Union, 1864-66* (unpublished MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1973), 3-10.

"little St. John's Wood looking villa" rented from J. W. Trutch,¹⁴ and the conflict was unresolved when the Keans arrived. The committee must have been furious, then, to find themselves snubbed by the Keans, who promptly aligned themselves with the Governor.

"Victoria looks like a toy capital," Ellen Kean observed. "Funny looking little wooden houses — and wooden roads — and wooden cottages and villas all about." Arriving on 9 December during a frost, she could still say, "The climate is delightful — never colder than an English winter." Accustomed to the Australian climate, Coppin suffered. "The snow is falling very thickly," he wrote to his wife. "I am in my bedroom with my fingers so cold I can scarcely hold my pen." Kean complained about the theatre, a converted wooden warehouse "with plenty of draughts."¹⁵ But all of them felt at home with the people: "It is such a relief to get away from those dreadful snuffling, spitting Yankees' [*sic*], with their boastful impudence," Kean thought, and his wife was charmed "to see a young girl's eyes droop when you looked at her. A San Francisco girl would outgaze the rudest man without a thought of being immodest." Shocked by the "forward and unfeminine lot of women" he saw in California, Coppin rejoiced to find himself "once more upon English soil." Out for a stroll, he met "five or six Australian people some of whom I knew very well."¹⁶

The visitors entered the life of the colony, choosing associates, passing judgements, and taking sides in disputes, instinctively guided by the familiar English caste system. Inevitably, the Keans and their manager parted company. Coppin thought Kean "selfish, dictatorial very bad tempered and offensive, and childish in some things"; Kean respected the Australian as "a good business man," but considered him "a *common* man" who gave "short and curt answers" under pressure. "This is truly natural but a well bred man of the world has the art to hide such feelings."¹⁷ As a celebrity, Kean had risen above the social stigma that clung to his profession. Besides, he had gone to Eton. Finding that the Governor was an old acquaintance, he declined all other invitations and got himself "taken up" by the Kennedys. The Keans dined with them on Saturday, 10 December; Mrs. Kennedy and her daughters made themselves "very amiable and agreeable." Kean's niece Patty Chapman, who played young heroines, was "in Heaven," Aunt Ellen wrote: "the

¹⁴ Hardwick, 216.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17, 204; Coppin, MS letter, 11 Dec. 1864, SLV.

¹⁶ Hardwick, pp. 205, 217; Coppin, MS Letter 11 Dec. 1864, SLV.

¹⁷ Coppin, MS letter 17 Aug. 1864, SLV; Hardwick, 170-71.

Governor's wife . . . drives her about in an open pony chaise and she has had one ride on horseback with the Governor himself and his second daughter. Tomorrow is the Ball when I suppose she will dance with His Excellency."¹⁸

The Keans readily adopted Kennedy's opinions of colonial life and politics, because they were essentially class attitudes: "Vancouver Island is a sad banishment for a governor's family. They had a few of their nicest people to meet us but the house is so small that they can scarcely seat a dozen people at dinner and twenty people around the little drawing room. . . . All that is required to render the place endurable is *society* . . . when the Admiral's wife is away there is little or no society for ladies."¹⁹ The Denmans sailed for Valparaiso aboard *HMS Sutlej*, the flagship, on the 10th. Naval officers of good family were almost the only "nice people" other than the Governor's family and staff, and the officer commanding *HMS Tribune* invited the Keans aboard on Sunday the 11th. They had probably met him at the Governor's dinner: Captain Lord Gillford (1832-1907) married Kennedy's older daughter in 1867.²⁰

Coppin sulked: "I was invited but declined because I do not feel comfortable in their company."²¹ In his correspondence from San Francisco he seems more at ease with the Keans, perhaps because they were all surrounded by alien Californians, but Victoria's British environment gave social expression to their different outlooks. To Mrs. Kean, the colonials were mostly "*plebeian and narrow minded*" because they sought responsible government: "the members of the assembly are slow, and self sufficient and from what I could learn lose sight of a great end and impede development by foolling [*sic*] each other. They are at a perfect standstill."²² This sounds like Kennedy's interpretation of local politics: his complaints led the Colonial Secretary to describe De Cosmos as "a thorough Democratic ruffian." The Assistant Undersecretary of State for the Colonies said "this petty body at Vancouver [Island] is exceptionally obstinate and unmanageable, and is among the worst specimens of a Colonial Assembly."²³

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 204, 206.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 216-17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 218; *British Colonist* 12 Dec. 1864; Hon. Vicary Gibbs, ed. *The Complete Peerage* (London: St. Catherine Press, 1913), III, 241.

²¹ Coppin, MS letter, 11 Dec. 1864, SLV.

²² Hardwick, 218.

²³ H. Robert Kendrick, "Amor De Cosmos and Confederation," in George W. Shelton, ed., *BC and Confederation* (Victoria: Morriss-University of Victoria, 1967), 71; minute by T. F. Elliot to Edward Cardwell, 4 May 1865, quoted in Hendrickson, xxxviii.

The politically naive Keans were probably unaware that their friendship was strengthening the Governor's hand in a power struggle, and frustrating the Committee which had sought to use their prestige for its own ends. The actors were fully engaged in playing Shakespeare and the "higher melodrama" to overflowing audiences of enthusiastic colonials. But Coppin had both the time and the inclination to become involved in local politics. In the Australian colony of Victoria he had been Member for Geelong in the Legislative Council from 1858 to 1863 and had fought for so many reforms and liberal measures that landed interests in Australia thought him a dangerous radical. As luck would have it, three of the "Australians" he met in the street were in a position to initiate him in the politics of Vancouver Island. Dr. James Trimble (1818-85) had been a Navy surgeon when Coppin met him in Adelaide. In 1849 he resigned his commission to seek gold in California, moved to Victoria in 1858 and was MLA for Victoria District, 1861-66. On issues other than union he usually voted with De Cosmos but, McClure wrote, "he avoids bother, and is more disposed to indulge in a quiet nap in the House than bore the members with a prosy speech." On Saturday, 10 December, he showed Coppin around a hospital — perhaps the new Female Hospital — and arranged an honorary membership in his club.²⁴

The same evening, Coppin declined an invitation to join Alexander Phillips, an acquaintance from Sydney, and Selim Franklin, MLA, for dinner. Both were Jews, Masons (like Coppin) and members of the Amateur Dramatic Society. Phillips was a soda-water manufacturer, and Franklin (with his brother Lumley) an auctioneer and Wharf Street importer.²⁵ On Tuesday, Coppin asked Trimble to dine at the club with the mayor and Alexander Bell of the *Vancouver Times*, which published on Thursday a letter from Coppin, advising Victorians how to avoid paying a high foreign exchange when they bought American postage stamps.²⁶ Evidently the Australian had discussed local affairs with his guests.

On Wednesday he dined with Ben Griffin (1809-81), amateur actor and proprietor of the Boomerang Inn, whose satirical poem on the elope-

²⁴ Obituary, *British Colonist*, 3 Jan. 1885; Coppin, Diary, 9-10 Dec. 1864, SLV; *British Colonist*, 4 Jan.; 24 Feb. 1865.

²⁵ Coppin, Diary, 10 Dec. 1864; MS letter, 11 Dec. 1864, SLV; J. B. Kerr, *Biographical Dictionary of Well-Known British Columbians* (Vancouver: Kerr and Begg, 1870), 268; David Rome, *The First Two Years* (Montreal: H. M. Caiserman, 1942), 43-44, 52-63; *British Columbia and Victoria Directory* (Victoria: F. P. Howard and Barnett, 1863).

²⁶ *Vancouver Times*, 15 Dec. 1864; Coppin, Diary 13 Dec. 1864.

ment of "Chief Douglas" daughter had achieved wide, if surreptitious, circulation. In New South Wales Griffin had once served Coppin as a script-writer, providing topical monologues for his popular character Billy Barlow, a simpleton who is an "apparently daft but shrewd commentator upon the idiosyncrasies of the sane." Billy was no longer in Coppin's repertoire, but his place was taken by Paul Pry, "an interfering busybody, snooping into other people's affairs with an apologetic air of injured innocence." When Coppin came to dinner again on Sunday the 18th, Griffin may have fed him local politics for dessert.²⁷

A by-election was brewing. In the Assembly, Charles Bedford Young led the "commercial gentlemen" who opposed union because it would bring tariffs and damage their import trade. In January 1865, Amor De Cosmos challenged Young; they both resigned their seats and stood for re-election with running-mates. Young and Gilbert Malcolm Sproat (erstwhile of the Kean committee) were thoroughly defeated by De Cosmos and Leonard McClure.²⁸ Franklin and Phillips supported Young and Sproat. Ben Griffin was a member of the committee to elect McClure, which made the Boomerang its headquarters. Under his guidance, Coppin was to play his part in the union of the colonies.

On Monday the MLAs gave their patronage to Kean's *King Lear*. "After the performance," Coppin wrote, "the MLAs and myself kept it up talking politics. They wished me to deliver a lecture upon political economy."²⁹ Kean's engagement ended on Wednesday, but there was to be a ball in his honour on Thursday, 22 December. Coppin took the opportunity to appear in his best parts. "Lots of Australians in the house," he wrote in his diary. "Mr. Kean much annoyed at my good house." The *Colonist* reported fully; apparently Paul Pry had delivered a speech on "political economy," no doubt from a script by Ben Griffin.

Mr. Coppin made some excellent political hits. He alluded jocularly to our large importations of provisions when we had facilities for raising our own produce. He also touched in the most humorous manner on the Education question and the Incorporation bill which had been only before Parliament for the last five years. In a few more years probably the measures would finally become law, thus showing the remarkable aptitude of the Legislature for labour.³⁰

²⁷ Bagot, 12, 26, 67; Vertical Files, PABC; Coppin's Diary, 9 Dec. 1864, SLV; *British Colonist*, 28 Aug. 1866.

²⁸ *British Colonist*, 13 Feb. 1865; De Cosmos 232, McClure 219, Sproat 163, Young 149. Ormsby, p. 217, incorrectly states that De Cosmos and McClure both resigned and stood for re-election.

²⁹ Diary, 19 Dec. 1864.

³⁰ *British Colonist*, 23 Dec. 1864.

The victims of Coppin's satire were the opponents of the "reform" party. On 12 December Young's successful motion to postpone a bill for the incorporation of Victoria was attacked in the Assembly and the press by De Cosmos and McClure in the same terms Coppin would use: "The people sent hon. members there to legislate — not to procrastinate."³¹ The "commercial gentlemen" were also successfully delaying a bill to establish public education. Selim Franklin opposed the school tax, arguing that users would prefer to pay rather than "have their pride hurt by accepting the benevolence of others." J. S. Helmcken disliked the "cumbersome" machinery of Trustees and a Board of Education, preferring direct administration by the Governor and Executive Council, a paternalistic arrangement that would have turned public education into "paupers' schools."³² Supported by Coppin's friend Trimble, De Cosmos led the fight for free education, democratically administered and financed by taxation: it became law in April 1865, when the by-election had given McClure a decisive vote.

Coppin's most important point was his first one. Victoria did indeed import "provisions" so liberally that even Mrs. Kean noticed it: "They import their *grain* and *fruit* and *vegetables*."³³ The papers listed daily shiploads of staples, produce, meat and livestock, all imported duty-free. This practice enriched the Wharf St. "commission merchants," but it drained the colony's wealth: anyone who understood "political economy" could see that. Adam Smith held that wealth derives from primary production, and while later thinkers disputed his rather narrow interpretation of the term, all agreed that production was the source of all prosperity: "the success of a people in agriculture is a stimulus to its manufacturing and commercial prosperity," said Jean Baptiste Say, and "it is the aim of good government to stimulate production."³⁴ McClure attributed the anti-union, anti-tariff attitudes of Wharf Street's men in the Assembly to ignorance: few of the MLAs "have ever in their lives given any study to political economy," he wrote, and Selim Franklin in particular had never shown "the first knowledge of political economy."³⁵

Coppin did not record the names of the MLAs who invited him to lecture on political economy, but the odds are that De Cosmos, primed

³¹ *Vancouver Times*, 13 Dec. 1864; see also the *British Colonist*, 13 Dec. 1864.

³² *British Colonist*, 5 May 1864; *Weekly Chronicle*, 11 Oct. 1864.

³³ Hardwick, p. 218.

³⁴ Jean Baptiste Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy; or the Production, Distribution and Consumption of Wealth*, trans. C. R. Princep (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1880), 138-39.

³⁵ *British Colonist*, 4 Jan. 1865; 31 Dec. 1864.

and perhaps accompanied by McClure, saw that the Australian was an experienced colonial political reformer who understood Ricardan economics. With the aid of Griffin, and in his peculiar way, Coppin obliged — not by direct assault at a political rally, but by satire in a crowded theatre. “Speech in Paul Pry a great Hit,” he wrote in his diary. He told his wife, “many went to the theatre first and the ball after and they say my speech was the talk of the Ball room.”³⁶ Coppin had declined to attend the ball: no doubt he “kept it up” with Griffin and the De Cosmos faction at the Boomerang Hotel instead. They had reason to celebrate. Many of Coppin’s audience were voters who remembered him from Australia; some may have been influenced to vote for McClure and De Cosmos in the forthcoming by-election. But presiding at the ball, Governor Kennedy had his own reasons for satisfaction. The Keans were his guests of honour. Their friendship had strengthened his position, and by socially snubbing the egregious “commercial gentlemen” of the Kean committee they had weakened his enemies. Ironically, the Wharf Street merchants who had invited the Keans to Victoria for their own political ends were the only losers.

³⁶ Coppin, *Diary*, 22 Dec. 1864; MS letter, 2 Jan. 1865, SLV.