

libel against Dungan, provoked finally by an editorial beginning:

There are certain specimens of humanity—they can scarcely be called men—whose instincts are so base and grovelling that they delight in wallowing in low notoriety, and periodically court the dragging of their names through the mire. Of this class the 'Journalist of Repute' [McMinn's usual epithet in the *Times*] stands in the foremost rank. With a private history as familiar to the residents of the West Coast as household words, he, HE of all others, has the audacity to enter the private circle, and defame the fair name of respectable ladies... [how he] could court another expose is beyond all comprehension, unless it is that he got tired of vegetating in the mud, and wished once again to be dragged through his native element.¹⁵

McMinn brought two charges of criminal libel against Dungan, which were referred to the Supreme Court in Wanganui, and the day after followed up with two informations for sureties of the peace against Dungan. The latter he was persuaded to drop, but a reference in the journal *Typo* indicates that he won his libel cases, though his suit for £300 damages was reduced to £25. Dungan, not to be outdone, brought two charges of libel himself against McMinn the following month; after a hearing in the Palmerston North District Court, however, he was forced to withdraw them, and subsequently restricted his editorial comments to the most virulent sarcasm.¹⁶

The *Times/Standard* battle thereafter took more orthodox business channels. In June 1881, the *Times* upped its circulation to three times a week; in December it began advertising 'The Times Book Depot and Stationer's Hall', which offered in addition to books and stationery a virtual newspaper library for people to browse in.¹⁷ But unfortunately Dungan died before these changes had shown results, in May of the following year.¹⁸ The newspaper was bought by J.R. Russell, one of the brothers who had started the Foxton *Manawatu Herald*. By January 1883 it, too, had become a daily paper.¹⁹

McMinn, meanwhile, having got the *Standard* on its feet, pressed ahead with his plans for a regional chain of newspapers by establishing the *Woodville Examiner*, *Waipawa Advertiser* and *East Coast Gazette*, and once this was under way he attempted to start another paper at Opunake. However the difficulties of obtaining finance, the problems of poor communications and the lack of suitable staff eventually defeated these plans—the Opunake scheme fell through, and in 1885 he was forced to sell the *Woodville Examiner*. In part this was due to the strain on his health—twice a week he used to carry columns of type set in the *Standard*'s office, and

after seeing the *Standard* issue published and having provided for the following day's issue, he set out on horseback late at night for Woodville via the Manawatu