

Gorge. Midnight would find him leading his horse and literally feeling his way round the winding precipitous Gorge road, the bushclad cliffs above him, the turbulent river many feet below.... Having arrived in Woodville in the early hours of the morning he immediately set to work to get the paper to press, and the next night would see him on the return hazardous trip to Palmerston North.²⁰

Though Alex McMinn was a strong man—six and a half feet tall and weighing eighteen stone—this strain eventually proved too much.

The *Standard* itself prospered, despite the depression of the 1880s. In fact 1883 was probably its peak year. McMinn began issuing town and country editions, the newspaper was appointed the official District Gazette,²¹ and it entered the job-printing business:

Having completed arrangements with a view to carrying on a large Jobbing Business, the *Standard* is prepared to undertake all kinds of Jobbing Printing, which will be executed with neatness and despatch and at *Wellington prices*.

Visiting cards, Posters, Billheads, Business cards, and all other classes of Jobbing Printing executed at the *Standard* office, Wellington prices.²²

A month later the *Standard* also began advertising the wares of John Watt, a Wellington bookseller:

JOHN WATT
Bookseller and Stationer Willis-Street
WELLINGTON
Look out for new advertise-
ment of STOCK to arrive
Shortly...²³

This is slightly ambiguous—was the newspaper the agent for these books, or were people to be enticed to Wellington? Either way, it was a canny tactic on McMinn's part, for the next month Hjalmar Graff, who had edited *Skandia* for J.P. Leary, finally began advertising his bookshop in the *Standard*. In January 1884 Macro's Tobacconist also took out advertising for the stationery they sold.²⁴ Meanwhile McMinn took on three more apprentices, began to issue Sunday supplements, and produced a Sheet Almanac, for sale in 1885.²⁵

Editorially, McMinn tended to support Liberal policies, but he did not involve himself in local politics as Dungan had.²⁶ (When the library burnt down in 1885 there were no newspaper appeals to restock.) The somewhat aloof stance may have been due to the status of District Gazette; when the *Times*, for instance, criticised the administration of the Manawatu County Council in 1883 it found itself boycotted from its supply of news by the Council.²⁷ Certainly when Fred Pirani, a member of the *Standard's* staff, stood for the House of Representatives in 1890 the electoral roll was printed by