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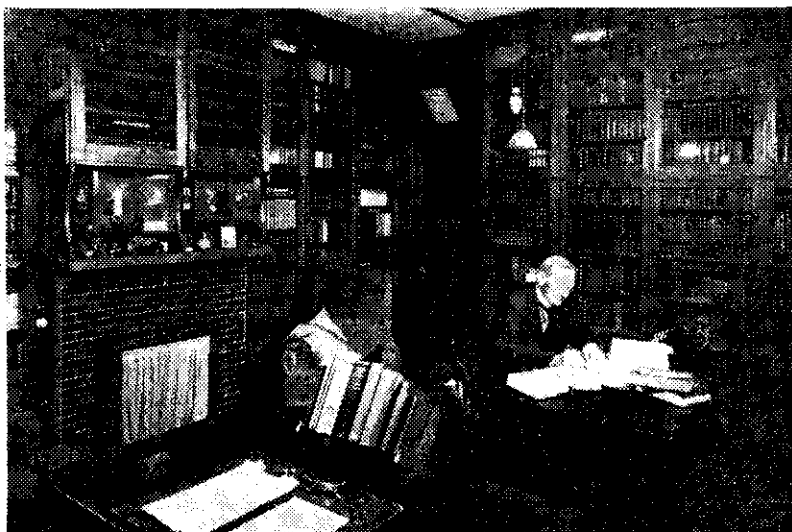
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A MAN AND HIS HOBBY

*Whangarei Resident
Knows All About
Dumas*

(Written for "The Listener" by A.M.)

IT is no reflection on the pretty and progressive town of Whangarei, chief centre of North Auckland, to say it is surprising to find there a specialised collection of French literature, which has an international standing. Whangarei is a long way indeed from France and from great book collections in Britain and America. Yet F. W. Reed has got together a collection bearing on the life and work of Alexandre Dumas that has no equal outside Paris; indeed Mr. Reed has some items that the Paris libraries lack. Last week Mr. Reed wrote for listeners about Dumas, and it is fitting that listeners should now be told how it is that Mr. Reed came to be one of the world's authorities on the author of *The Three Musketeers* and *Monte Cristo*.

As befits the subject of his life hobby, Mr. Reed's success in a small country town at the other side of the world from France is a romance. It is also an inspiration. For where could you find a more impressive example of what a man can do with a hobby when he has the will? Frank Reed had no special privileges of education, wealth, or position. When he began to collect Dumas, Whangarei was a good deal more out of the world than it is now. His daily business kept him working long hours. And for some years after he began he did not know French.

Chemistry and Books

The story begins with a boy in England, a boy with a passion for historical novels, and convinced, through one of Dumas's—*The Queen's Necklace*—that this was the way such novels should be written. He came out to New Zealand at the age of 12, and for the next 10



In the photograph at the top, F. W. Reed is seen in his library at Whangarei. Below is a photograph of Alexandre Dumas, a good deal older than he was in the picture we reproduced last week.

years added to his stock of Dumas's novels, and collected scraps of information about them. He went to work in a chemist's shop in Whangarei, and qualified as a chemist. In time, through the sale of stationery, a book side to the business was started, and Mr. Reed was put in charge. There was a chemist on one side of the shop, and a book store on the other. The book business grew until the firm was doing its own buying overseas.

"Blood to the Tiger"

In 1902, to mark the centennial of Dumas's birth in 1802, there were published in England two important books on the Frenchman, and from these Mr. Reed learned that his favourite romancer had written many more books than were accessible to English readers, and in addition to his novels, he had put out plays and poetry, books of travel, and history. The next landmark was his contact in 1916 with the late R. S. Garnett, son of Dr. Garnett of the British Museum, and the greatest authority on Dumas. Garnett helped Mr. Reed a great deal. He sent him a copy of a rare French work on Dumas, having secured for himself the copy owned by the famous Andrew Lang. Since he could not read this book, Mr. Reed was fired to learn French, and translate. Working with dictionaries and grammar and the

(continued on next page)