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seemed to me an important point, since the main points raised by speakers in this discussion were (a) that children sit up listening to serials which may be all right for adults, but are wrong for youngsters, (b) that it is neither necessary nor desirable to omit all sensation from children's serials, but that a little goes a long way, (c) that it is partly the lack of other suitable recreation which emphasises the fascination of the radio serial for children. That such points loom large enough to be a problem for parents and teachers seems to me not so much the fault of the radio stations as of the parents themselves. The *Citizens' Forum*, while agreeing that a comprehensive over-all policy is necessary when the authorities are planning children's programmes, admitted that there are other factors to be considered in the case of the individual serial and the individual child, and that the individual parent does have one final resource at his disposal—switching off the radio altogether.

A Friend in Need

THE great test of a friendship is that it can be picked up after long absence exactly where it left off, and on this basis the friendship between myself and Will Hay must be the real McCoy. It must be a good six months since I heard my last Will Hay programme, but when I tuned in to 2ZB I found the worthy doctor almost exactly where I left him, in arrears with his landlady and *in extremis* with his pupils. And yet strangely enough the pattern never palls. There is wisdom in giving us the whole man, the Muffin at home and abroad, so that we can compare the autocrat of the breakfast-table with the mock-martinet of the class-room. In both spheres he manages to maintain his ascendancy, but only just, and every week there is the delicious possibility that Alfie or Smart may get the last word. . . . Meanwhile Doctor Muffin carries on. His jokes are old ones, they do not flick past like shots in the nickelodeon, but are slowly and lovingly produced. The audience, streets ahead, is in a good position to admire them from all angles. That they are funny is due to the superb showmanship of Will Hay and the boys, and also to the fact that homespun puns are good-wearing. Last week we spent minutes exploring the possibilities of rods, poles and perches, chains and furlongs—minutes calculated to convert any advocate of the metric system to the philosophy of Muddling Through with Muffin.

Supercharged

ONE of the most "intense" programmes to which I have ever listened came from 4YA, in the series of BBC productions *Whom the Gods Love*. These dramatizations deal with those of the famous who, fortunate or unfortunate, died in the glory of youth and achievement. I had already heard similar programmes dealing with the young Pitt, and Wolfe, the hero of Quebec. Both of these were sober productions befitting the histories of politician and soldier, the events of their lives providing excitement enough without any extra help from the radio dramas. I wasn't prepared for the atmosphere of the programme on Shelley, although I might have anticipated that such a

hero would demand a different technique of approach. The programme took as its starting-point in time the hours spent in waiting by the poet's wife Mary and friend Jane, in the Italian villa where the realisation came that he would never return alive. Obviously Shelley's tragic end, the sailing away, the storm, the romantic Italian scene, and the rest of the factual surroundings were enough to lend involuntary emotion even to a prosaic account of what happened. But when the emotional atmosphere is supercharged by every device in the literary power of a good radio writer, it is difficult not to feel that the programme has overbalanced and fallen into hysteria. The natural emotion of the two women was artificially heightened by the use of an Italian fiesta as background music, accompanied by such premonitions and fears that an already tense performance seemed unbearably passionate. In the flashback technique, used for filling in details of the poet's life, there lurked a certain false emphasis, too, on the subject of death by drowning, premonitions of Shelley's end being suggested rather too often. I should have enjoyed "Percy Byshe Shelley" a little more without so much tearing of my feelings to tatters, but I must admit that it was an exceptional presentation of an exceptional subject, and an exceptionally good programme in spite of the emotion.

Ho for Chaos!

THE discussion on New Zealand architecture by a group of architectural students. (2YA, May 31), should have had the effect of puncturing my proverbial New Zealand complacency and making me aware of the mote in New



Zealand building (Broadcasting House is a notable example). Instead it made me conscious of the fact that there are penalties as well as profits in the architectural profession, since the chaotic skyline of the Wellington shop-tops and the whimsical disorder of her dormitory suburbs can cause acute professional pain, whereas the bargain-happy shopper and the work-weary commuter know no such pang. This was perhaps the most earnest discussion I have heard in the series, and quite the most unanimous, in fact, so united were the participants that on several occasions one was able to finish another's sentence for him (and did). "Absolutely ghastly" was a well-aimed comment, and not even Alice's Queen of Hearts was so sweeping in her denunciations. Their conclusions: (1) That the Public Must Be Educated, (2) That the Profession must set standards of design since these do not exist in New Zealand now. My reflection—that it takes a long time to educate the public, and that meanwhile shop-windows, if not skylines, will continue inviting and dormitory suburbs sleep-conductive



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