

**Safety Valve**

(Continued from Page Two)

Wanamaker's or Gimbels. Yes, the prices are familiar, too, that is when they aren't a little higher.

Now we turn onto the bike path down the wide Avenue of America. This will be a beautiful ride in the summer when the trees that line the paths are in leaf. Right here is where the handsome young policeman stopped us one day for going the wrong way. "You're Americans? Oh well, then, you can do anything you want," he laughed. We didn't do it again. Soon we're at the Institute de Medecine Tropicale Prince Leopold, a group of fine large buildings equipped for research and instruction, and including an out-patient clinic. I think that if I were a Bel-

gian I would be prouder of this institute than of almost anything in the country. The professors have all spent many years in Congo and are recognized as top men in their fields.

There's M. Dubois for Pathology (the study of the diseases). He's the world's foremost leprosy expert. He spent several years in the States and likes to make gentle little jokes about Americans and use the English names for diseases. M. Van-Riel, about hygiene. M. Mattlet leads us a merry chase keeping up with his drawings and descriptions of one-celled animals. Now and then he tells a joke and has us laughing almost as much as his chuckle as at what he says. Our favorite is the entomologist, M. Schouteden, with his beautiful white goatee and jolly twinkling eyes. He tells us that for the exam he likes to attach wings to the wrong insects to see if we really know our stuff. We suspect he's kidding, but we will surely want to be on our toes when we go for his exam, as for all of them.

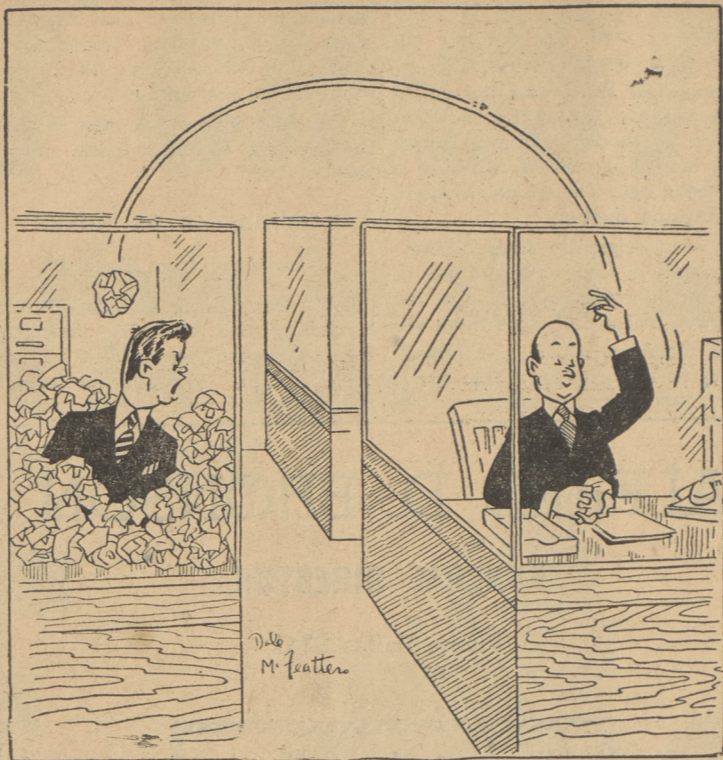
Don't be misled by the jokes and twinkles. The courses are tough. In four months enough material is covered to fill up a year in an American college with our more personalized teaching methods. The examinations are oral, in French of course. In addition to the lectures, we have three laboratory assistants who help us see, draw and identify all the strange animals we've been hearing about in class.

M. Anciaux, general secretary of the Institute, gives us lectures on the people and customs of the Congo. His love for the Congo sticks out all over; he spent the greater part of his life there and his children and grandchildren were born there. He can wax lyrical in describing the country, and what he says about the people shows real understanding and sympathy—the Congo must love him too. While we're talking about teachers I must mention M. VanDyck, who taught our brief French course after we came to Antwerp in January. His gentleness and patience were a lesson to me; he could sit and listen to us struggling through our speeches when it seemed remarkable that he could understand a word; then he would say, "That was very good; only, here are a few points to which you should pay attention..."

Sometimes we take our lunches to school; then we have an hour and a half in which to explore the oldest part of town with its narrow winding streets above which soars the marvelous tower of the Cathedral. On almost every corner there is a niche containing a statue of Mary and the Christ Child. Part of the section near the Cathedral is

**STRICTLY BUSINESS**

by McFeatters



"I'll be glad when you get a wastebasket!"

quite openly the city's center of immorality.

Or we may head for one of our favorite spots, the docks, where we walk along the promenade and watch the ships coming and going from all over the world. There's a Swedish ship just in from California with crates and crates of oranges; farther on a little American freighter is being loaded up with Belgian mirrors. In the midst of this modern commerce stands a fascinating old turreted castle where used to live a giant who chopped off the hands of merchant ship captains who refused to pay him the tribute in salt which he expected. Fortunately a stalwart hero came along and chopped off not only the hand but the head of the giant. You can see the story depicted by a huge statue in Grand' Place.

We can go back by the canal and see the barges of all shapes and sizes, many of them with a washing hanging out, for the barge man and his family live in the neat little lace-curtained cabin at one end. At noon time things are very quiet, for Belgium relaxes over its dinner. Then the bustle starts again and we must get back to school.

At last the day is over and we are sitting down to one of the luscious meals prepared by Madame Kerriman and her friend Olasine. Afterwards we have a Bible reading, prayer and some hymns, a different girl taking charge each evening in her turn. Then the gang invades the kitchen, the dishes are done before you can say "N'est-ce pas" and we retire behind a pile of books to try to unravel the mysteries of the life cycle of Fasciola hepatica (a worm, not a flower that blooms in the Spring) or Trypanosoma gambiense, a pretty little parasite transmitted by Glossina palpalis (tse-tse to you.)

It is hard to remember all the hundreds of details that make up the picture of daily life, because they

soon become a part of your life too. For instance—door handles aren't round, they are like those in hospitals that can be conveniently opened with the elbow; heavy shutters are rolled down over the ground floor windows (usually very large) at sundown. Everybody carries briefcases, from bricklayers (he has his lunch in it) to professors; except for this common factor there is no mistaking a "worker" for a member of the middle or upper class, and people are more conscious of such distinctions than we are at home. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of noticeably intoxicated men I've seen here; people like a glass of wine with a meal, a bit of wine or beer in a sidewalk cafe, whiskey practically never. "Frite" wagons (French fries) take the place of our popcorn stands. Few people have refrigerators—the cool cellar serves the purpose; water is heated by what the English call "geysers": the gas lights up when you turn the faucet on and heats the water as it flows through the pipe; central heating (steam or hot water) is common, but sometimes must be supplemented by a little coal stove; the toilet is always in a room separate from the washbowl and tub. Belgian kitchens don't look like ads from the Saturday Evening Post (a very popular magazine here) but excellent meals come out of them; a Hollywood figure is not one of the standards of beauty—it's better to look as if you've had enough to eat. Belgian children and young people have very fair complexions, even with dark hair, and the brightest rosiest cheeks I've seen.

People live comfortably but don't spend a lot of money on gadgets. They work very hard for what they get, save and spend prudently. One of the first startling things I saw when I arrived in Brussels was a furniture store with a big sign: "Credit a l'Americain." That's one of the

recent ideas the sensible, conservative middle class doesn't thank us for.

And while we're on the subject, would you Americans (others please excuse the digression) like to see a picture of yourself taken from this side of the ocean? Well, you're an unbelievably huge country consisting mainly of New York City. The typical American chews gum in one side of his or her mouth and talks out of the other, loudly and nasally, all about how everything at home is the biggest in the world. He thinks of nothing but rushing around making dollars, and when he makes them he thinks of nothing but spending them or giving them away, usually too much or too little or to the wrong people. He's ignorant about history, geography and most other items of culture. But at least he's fanatical about personal cleanliness. Before you get mad—Americans are always ready for a good laugh on themselves and are astoundingly frank about their own faults. Belgians are inclined to be more well informed and sympathetic than other Europeans, partly perhaps because of our comparative economic equality which eliminates the important factor of jealousy. Those who have had missionaries in their homes have learned a lot of new things and change some ideas. But we're missionaries for Christ, not for the U.S.A., though it's sometimes hard to convince people that the government isn't helping us. Belgium does not have a state church, unlike most European countries—please note that there are as many Protestant state churches as Catholic, and that their records are not all pretty either. But the government does subsidize various church activities, including Protestant hospitals and schools in Congo. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic, at least nominally, and it is a challenge to be a Protestant. The Protestant churches very much need our prayers and encouragement.

As for the rest of Belgium and its beautiful old churches and chateaux, its fine works of art (Memling, the VanEycks, Rubens), lovely carillon towers—I've described most of them as well as my trips to other countries in other personal and family letters. I hope to take more trips before I leave and will try to

sum up my impression of the other countries in a later letter.

For all your Christmas cards and letters, many thanks. I love to hear from all of you, even though I can't answer each one personally. I hope that all of you, individually and in church groups—are praying for me in my studies and for the work

in Congo to which I am so eager to be going. And I pray for all of you a deep experience of Christ in your lives and the real happiness of serving Him, whatever your work may be.

Very sincerely  
Dorothy R. Gilbert

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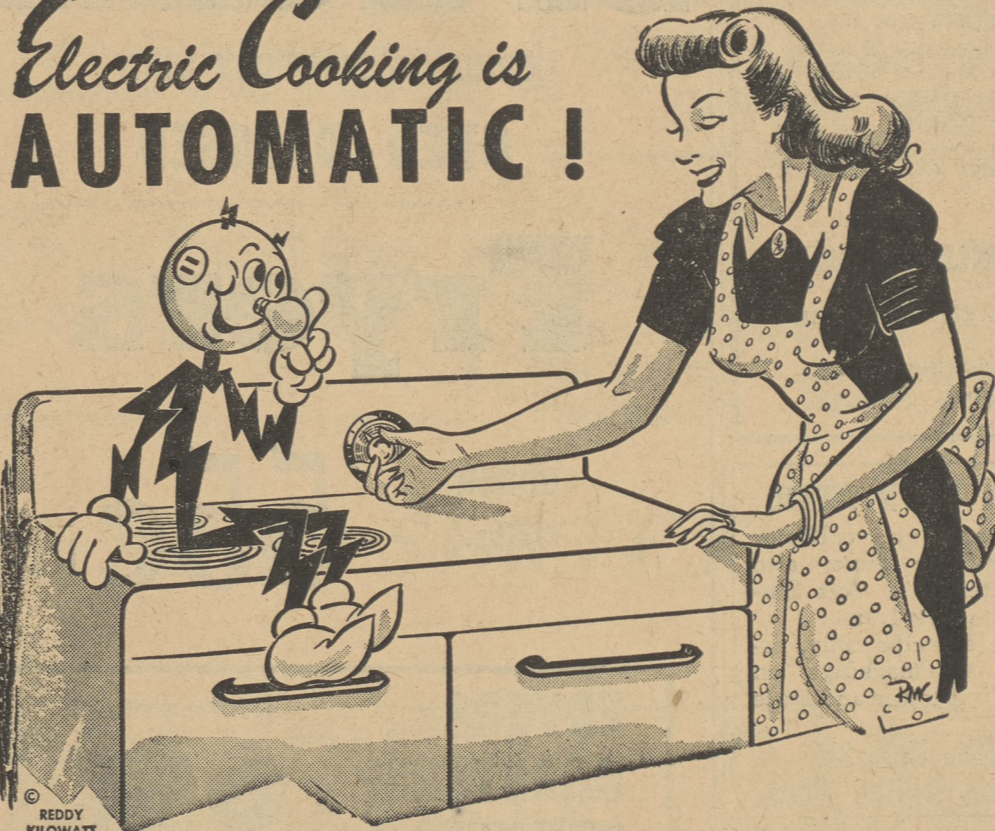
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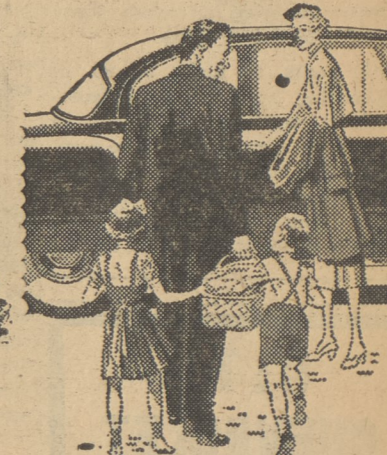
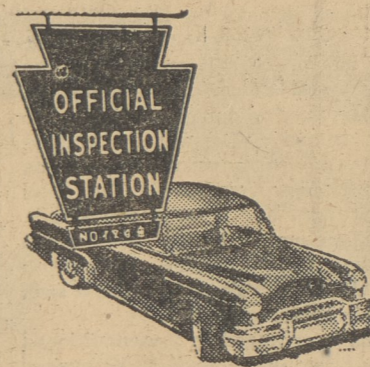


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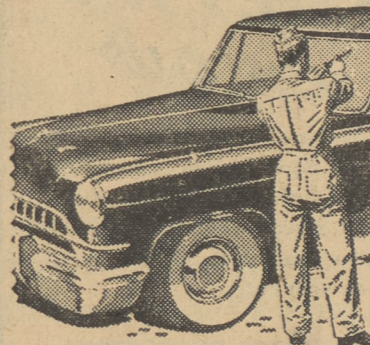


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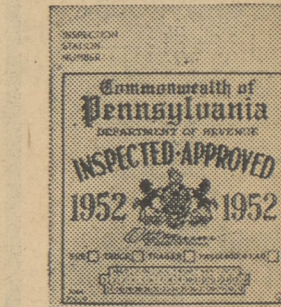
any official Pennsylvania Inspection Station—marked with a Keystone and number for your guidance—and do it early. The current car inspection period started May 1, 1952.

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