

## Diary note from 1942<sup>1</sup>

by  
A.N. Prior

10/12/42. A couple of days ago I had occasion to propound the antinomy of "The Liar" to a fellow-AC2 who was formerly an apprentice linotypist. "The statement which I am now making", I said, "is false", and proceeded to prove that if it was true, it was false, and if false, true. His first reply was, "But you haven't made the statement yet" -, which wasn't bad. And then he said "It is like the yarn about the question at the 3ZB<sup>2</sup> quiz. The chap asked a girl among the competitors, 'What did the girl say to the man the night they were married?' The competitor said 'Christ. That's is a hard one!' And the announcer said, 'That is right - that's the answer - the ten bobs are yours'." The conversation then changed, and I omitted to ask the linotypist why the antinomy of the Liar reminded him of this anecdote. There is, in fact, an important feature in common between them - both involve confusion in the "order of abstraction" of a sentence - but I'd be interested to know how the linotypist would express it. (For purposes of a logic lecture the given anecdote could be replaced by more respectable ones about 3ZB quiz sessions and statements which were intended as comments on the question and taken as answers to it. It's a confusion about the number of inverted commas that ought to be put around the statement).

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<sup>1</sup> This text has been edited by Martin Prior. The original is kept in the Prior Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Box 7.

<sup>2</sup> The commercial radio for Christchurch and Canterbury province.