

Illustrations of Logic. By Paul T. Lafleur.  
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Prof. Lafleur has taken the trouble to ransack more than a hundred good writers and cull from them three hundred specimens of arguments, of which the greater part are valid or invalid according as they are free or not from any confusion between the ideas of some and all. That is to say, they are arguments that can be tested by Aristotelian syllogistics. The preface supplies unintentionally a three hundred and first example, for Mr. Lafleur there remarks that an instructor "finds difficulty in convincing his hearers that the logic of the class-room bears any relation to thought as met with in ordinary discussion and books"--implying that these illustrations ought to convince them that that logic supplies all that is requisite to judge of the validity of ordinary reasoning. Now, it is certainly true that most students, confusedly perceiving that any argument which required close attention to apprehend its force depends upon something more than the some and all of traditional syllogistic, jump to the conclusion that there is no important element of right inference of which that doctrine takes account. This confuses some illative principles with all, and the conclusion is not true, since training in ordinary logic will almost insure a man against confusions of that kind. But, on the other hand, those who teach the old logic, finding that a great many important arguments can be thrown into syllogistic form, which really only proves that they involve a syllogistic element, jump to the conclusion that no important principle of reasoning has been overlooked, thereby falling into the very same fallacy that ensnares their pupils. The conclusion is not true, since, upon the examination of the syllogistic statement, it will often be found (not to say always, if the argument is at all difficult) that the whole gist of the reasoning has been thrown into the premises, so that the question of its validity is untouched by any criticism of the forms of the syllogisms. Hence, the need for a logic of relatives. The following three hundred and second "illustration" will show, if it be syllogistically treated, the truth of the above; ordinary syllogistic being incompetent to decide whether it is a sound argument or not:

If our duties on Cuban sugar were abolished, either our consumers would buy their sugar much cheaper, or else Cuban planters would get a far better price for their sugar. But the latter event would create a powerful stimulus to the production of sugar in Cuba, and since what now limits the production there is not so much a lack of suitable land or of anything of which the possible supply is already near exhaustion, but only the cost of machinery, etc., which can be had in almost any quantity at

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present prices or lower, it follows that the production would be immensely increased if much better prices could be got. Then, since this country must remain the principal market for Cuban sugar, either much more sugar must be sold here, or else the supply from other quarters (which is not now nearly so great as that from Cuba) must be very greatly curtailed. But, on the one hand, our people already use extravagant amounts of sugar, almost as much as they would if it cost nothing. Hence, a very considerable reduction of price would be necessary in order to increase the consumption in any large proportion. Nor, on the other hand, could the production of cane-sugar elsewhere than in Cuba be greatly curtailed unless there were a motive for partially abandoning its production, in the shape of a considerable diminution of the profits of that production. In either case, therefore, the price of sugar to consumers in the United States would be very considerably reduced.

Let anybody who thinks that, even granting the facts alleged, the above is not a sound argument (as most of our readers will probably agree it is not), endeavor to detect the flaw in it by any ordinary syllogistic rules, or let anybody show it is sound reasoning by those rules (without throwing the gist of the argument into the premises), and in either event we will admit that something has been done to rehabilitate the logic of the schools.

Mr. Lafleur may remonstrate that he puts forth no argument in his preface, but merely states a fact. John Dryden might on the same ground protest against Mr. Lafleur's Illustration No. 1, which is Dryden's couplet--

"All human things are subject to decay,  
And when fate summons, monarchs must obey."

But the compiler would rightly reply, "Mr. Dryden, you perhaps had no definite intention of arguing, but in fact you did argue essentially as in the stock example, 'All men are mortal; Sortes is a man; hence, Sortes is mortal.'" In like manner, Mr. Lafleur's statement of fact does convey to the reader's mind an argument, and, if insidiously, so much the more dangerously.

After all this tirade, we desire to say that Mr. Lafleur's little book will certainly be an enlivening and useful agent in the classroom. We wish that somebody would supplement it with a collection of real illustrations of relative reasonings, of striking problems in the doctrine of chances, of moot cases in inductive reasoning, and of examples in hypothetical investigations.

P 00735