

The Field.



Fencing.

This operation will require early attention on the part of the settler, and indeed should be a subject of forethought before a single tree is felled. If there be a cedar or black ash swamp on the lot, it will be wisdom to depend on it for a supply of fence timber. From its readiness to split, its lightness and durability, cedar stands at the top of the list of fence woods, and when it can be had, you need "seek no further." But it is only in certain localities that this valuable timber is found, and in its absence, the next best choice must be made. This is undoubtedly black ash. But it is often the case, that neither of these are within reach, and then it will be needful to select very carefully as the process of chopping goes on, such trees as may answer this important purpose. Chestnut, hickory, oak, elm, bass-wood, &c., may be converted into rails, and all clean, straight-grained trees of suitable size should be singled out and set apart for fencing. They should be cut up in logs of suitable length for splitting into rails and stakes; the former being from eleven to twelve, and the latter from seven to nine feet long. These logs must be "butted off" as it is termed; i. e. the kerf or chip is made only on one side, the other being cut off square as in chopping down a tree. When the clearing is logged up, the fence cuts must be drawn to the edges of the clearing, and to where division fences are intended to run. They will then be where they are wanted when they come to be split into rails. The exercise of much judgment and skill is required in order to split timber economically into rails and stakes. Without this, a great deal of labour will be vainly expended, and no little good timber wasted. Usually a log will split best from the small end. Some timber splits readily through the heart, while in other cases, this cannot be done, and pieces must be "slabbed off" as it is termed. A little experience, and careful trial of

different methods, will soon make the settler expert at rail splitting. The best of the stake logs must be selected for bar-posts. Those from ten to twelve inches in diameter will answer best for this purpose. In splitting them, care must be taken to calculate how many posts a log will make. If it will make four it should be split through the centre, and then by tracing or starting it a little with the axe and beetle on the side,



MODE OF SPLITTING A LOG INTO FOUR PARTS.

the two halves may be split in two again the wide way, as represented in the above figure. When a log will only make three parts, a slab should be taken off each side, in the manner shown by the subjoined figure. The



MODE OF SPLITTING A LOG INTO THREE PARTS.

split should be started carefully with the axe and beetle from the end, and the course of the opening directed on the sides of the log as the wedges are driven into the end. Without such precautions, a post will often be spoiled by the split running out.

Rails, stakes, and posts being in readiness, the next thing will be to put up the fence. This is usually done in the worm, or zig-zag style. Straight fences involve more labour, and where both land and timber are abundant, the zig-zag plan is preferable. Fences are often made in a very slovenly manner. From want of care in building they are frequently to be met with in a shaky, toppling, tumble-down condition. The proper worm or crook has not been given,—the rails have not been laid securely,—and the fence is not perpendicular. It is a very common fault to leave them without any protection at the corners, when they are easily thrown down by cattle, colts, or the wind. Many cattle are taught breachiness by the insufficiency of the fences. Stakes and riders should always be deemed indispensable. When the stakes are fixed at the fence corners, they project some two feet beyond the fence and so take up considerable room. It is better to put the stakes upright at the corners and connect each pair at the top by means of a withe, a cap with two inch auger holes through it, or a loop of annealed wire. Another plan consists in placing the riders (for which two long poles stretching over two or three panels are best), in a straight line on the top and at the centre of the fence, and then placing upright stakes in each inner corner between the rider and the fence, the lower end simply resting on the ground, and the other wedged closely between the top rail and the riders.

The accompanying figures, showing a ground plan of the several styles of fence will explain these directions, and make the mode of construction plain.

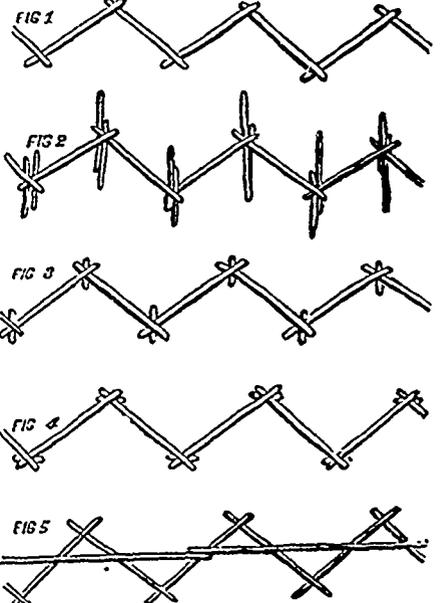


Fig. 1 represents the simple zig-zag fence, as seen too often on carelessly kept domains, without stakes or riders.

Fig. 2 is the common "staked and ridged" fence, well-braced and strong, but taking up too much land.

Fig. 3 is a better method, having upright stakes placed at the opposite corners, which are held together by a withe, cap, or loop of wire.

Fig. 4 is like the last, but better, because the stakes are put in the acute corners, and so keep their places and brace the fence more firmly.

Fig. 5 shows the method last suggested, and which, though not perhaps the neatest, is by far the most secure of the plans described.

It is very necessary to set the fence corners on blocks of stone or wood, so as to keep them well up from the ground, and secure their lasting as long as possible. In order to keep the fence straight, a number of small, thin stakes must be set in a line, where the middle of the fence is to come. The length of the rails will determine the amount of worm or crook to be given. It is better to give a fence too much than too little. Old settlers recommend peeling the rails and poles if practicable, as a fence lasts much longer when this is done.

Sometimes a wretched apology for a fence is made with brush, a practice which cannot be too strongly condemned. It soon rots, and breaches are easily made through it,—besides, it is in constant danger of taking fire. A device sometimes resorted to, is the log or pole fence. Where easy splitting timber is scarce,