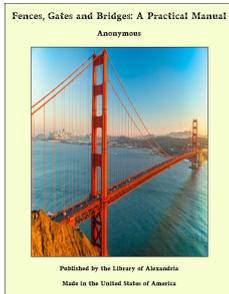


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FENCES GATES AND BRIDGES A PRACTICAL MANUAL EBOOKS 2019



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The zigzag rail fence was almost universally adopted by the settlers in the heavily timbered portions of the country, and countless thousands of miles of it still exist, though the increasing scarcity of timber has brought other styles of fencing largely into use. Properly built, of good material, on a clear, solid bed, kept free from bushes and other growth to shade it and cause it to rot, the rail fence is as cheap as any, and as effective and durable as can reasonably be desired. Good chestnut, oak, cedar, or juniper rails, or original growth heart pine, will last from fifty to a hundred years, so that material of this sort, once in hand, will serve one or two generations. This fence, ten rails high, and propped with two rails at each corner, requires twelve rails to the panel. If the fence bed is five feet wide, and the rails are eleven feet long, and are lapped about a foot at the locks, one panel will extend about eight feet in direct line. This takes seven thousand nine hundred and twenty rails, or about eight thousand rails to the mile. For a temporary fence, one that can be put up and taken down in a short time, for making stock pens and division fences, not intended to remain long in place, nothing is cheaper or better. The bed for a fence of this kind should not be less than five feet across, to enable it to stand before the wind. The rails are best cut eleven feet long, as this makes a lock neither too long nor too short; and the forward end of each rail should come under the next one that is laid. The corners, or locks, as they are called, should also be well propped with strong, whole rails, not with pieces of rails, as is often done. The props should be set firmly on the ground about two feet from the panel, and crossed at the lock so as to hold each other, and the top course of the fence firmly in place. They thus act as braces to the fence, supporting it against the wind. Both sides of the fence should be propped. The top course of rails should be the strongest and heaviest of any, for the double purpose of weighting the fence down, and to prevent breaking of rails by persons getting upon it. The four courses of rails nearest the ground should be of the smallest pieces, to prevent making the cracks, or spaces between the rails, too large. They should also be straight, and of nearly even sizes at both ends. This last precaution is only necessary where small pigs have to be fenced out or in, as the case may be. The fence, after it is finished, will have the appearance of figure 1, will be six rails high, two props at each lock, and the worm will be crooked enough to stand any wind, that will not prostrate crops, fruit trees, etc. A straighter worm than this will be easy to blow down or push over. The stability of this sort of fence depends very largely on the manner of placing the props, both as to the distance of the foot of the prop rail from the fence panel, and the way it is locked at the corner.

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