



THE CENTRE FARMER

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

JOHN A. WOODWARD, Howard,
LEONARD RHONE, Centre Hall,
JAMES F. WEAVER, Milesburg,
Publishing Committee.

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THE CENTRE FARMER will be issued
monthly, and is devoted exclusively to such
subjects as have a direct bearing upon the
interests of the farming community, in gen-
eral and the CENTRE COUNTY AGRICULTU-
RAL SOCIETY in particular.

Terms Free, and Postage Prepaid.

ADVERTISING.—We have still room
for a limited number of advertisements—
giving preference to such as will be of in-
terest to farmers.

Terms—\$1 per inch for first insertion,
and 75 cents for each subsequent insertion.
Local Notices—20 cents per line.

Our next Annual Fair will
be held on the Society's grounds,
at Bellefonte, on Tuesday, Wed-
nesday, Thursday and Friday,
being the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th
days of October, 1875.

FENCE CORRESPONDENCE.

Our little paragraph on the fence ques-
tion, in our last issue, seems to have ex-
cited considerable interest. We publish
below two communications which we
have received upon the subject, but do
not intend, by so doing, to endorse or
become responsible for the views of our
correspondents. It may be, however,
that the time is not far distant when
these views will not be held to be so rad-
ical as they now seem:

To the Pub. Com. of the Centre Farmer:

GENTLEMEN—I have received a copy of
the first number of a paper published by
our Agricultural Society, under your super-
vision, and am greatly pleased with the
evidence which it gives of life and enter-
prise in the Society. Aside from the articles
directly concerning the Society and its com-
ing fair, the one which interested me most
was that under the title of "Fences," be-
cause this is a subject which has commanded
my earnest attention, as a farmer, for sever-
al years past; and if you admit "corre-
spondents" to your columns, I should be
glad of an opportunity to "say my say,"
believing, with you, that this "is becoming
one of the absorbing questions of the times
with farmers." You ask, "How shall we
cheapen our fences? or, what is better, how
shall we dispense with them entirely?"
And here, gentlemen, is where you "hit the

nail on the head." We must dispense with
them entirely, and thus settle the question
of their cost at once and forever. This, to
many, perhaps most, of your readers will
seem a startling proposition, but it does
seem to me that when once we farmers, as a
class, realize the enormous cost, directly and
indirectly of fencing, and the utter absence
of benefit arising therefrom, either to indi-
viduals or the community, it will meet with
universal approbation.

It is said that every question has two
sides, and it may be that this is not an ex-
ception to the rule; but I confess my inabil-
ity to see any good reason why fences
should exist at all, excepting to such limited
extent as would serve to confine the animals
on each farm, or belonging to each indi-
vidual, to the small amount of space needed
for their accommodation. With your per-
mission I give the following reasons for
thinking that we should "dispense with
them entirely."

First. They are unsightly. I do not deny
the possibility of building a handsome fence,
and will even admit that I have seen those
to which I could cheerfully accord their full
measure of beauty, but that the hideous
barricades, ycleped fences, which we find
everywhere in this country, erected around
and through what would otherwise be beau-
tiful and neatly-kept farms, with all their
broken "posts," ragged "props," crooked
"rails," lean-to "riders," peaked "stakes,"
tumble-down "corners," zig-zag lines, heaps
of stone, lines of briars, piles of brush, groves
of elders, clumps of sumac, nests of abomi-
nable weeds, and all-pervading air of dilapi-
dation, can sustain any claim to beauty, even
in its most "rugged" (or ragged) form, I
utterly deny, and risk my reputation as a
man of taste, on the denial.

Second. They are the most prolific source
and persistent propagators of the terrible
nuisance of weeds which every good farmer
everywhere hourly regrets and daily combats.
Effectually repelling cultivation on
either side, whether enclosing the highway,
separating neighbors, or dividing the wheat
field from the potato patch on the same farm,
for fear that one may contaminate the other,
their only "mission" seems to be that of
gathering the seed of every noxious weed
that grows, and protecting them in the use
of the richest soil the farm affords, that
they may scatter broadcast their thousand-
fold production to pollute the fields adjoining.

Third. They are, for a large portion of
the year, an obstruction to the highway, by
reason of the snow drifts, which the wind,
through their agency, piles in half the
roads in every township in the Northern
States. I believe I am safe in saying that
there is not a road district in this county
whose inhabitants were not put to great
inconvenience, and more or less expense,
during the last winter from this cause.

Fourth, (and this is the last reason which
I shall now take time, or ask you for space,
to give.) They are the greatest and most
useless expense which we farmers are called
upon to bear. "A negative cannot be
proven," and I leave it for their advocates
to show their utility, while I hastily and im-
perfectly try to give an adequate idea of
their cost: Suppose a man to have a farm
of one hundred acres, nearly or quite square
in form, with a public highway passing
through it in one direction, and that he
divides it into five twenty-acre fields, in
order to have the rotation of crops common
in this country. This is perhaps as favor-
able to cheap fencing as any farm we could

find, yet I defy the owner to erect the fences
required, of even moderately good posts and
rails, at a cost of less than one thousand
dollars. The simple interest on this is sixty
dollars per annum, and in addition to this
we must allow ten per cent. for "wear and
tear," or, in other words, establish a "sink-
ing fund" of one hundred and sixty dollars
per year with which to renew the fence at the
end of ten years, for this is as long as we can
expect it to last. This fence, if built of posts
and rails, in perfectly straight lines, will
occupy not less than one acre of the very
best land on his farm, better worth one
hundred dollars than any other acre is worth
fifty, giving us another item of six dollars
for interest. So here we have an annual
outlay on a farm of one hundred acres, favor-
ably situated, of one hundred and sixty-
six dollars, or, in other words, a direct
yearly tax of one dollar and sixty-six cents
on every acre of land on the farm, to main-
tain a relic of semi-civilization, and an
unmitigated nuisance, which has no excuse
for its existence, excepting that of preced-
ent. If any farmer were required to pay
one-fourth of this amount for the exting-
uishment of the national debt there would
be such an universal outcry of "oppressive
taxation" as would drive any political
party which should propose the measure out
of power and out of existence forever.

To generalize a little: Robinson gives the
first cost of the fences of New York at
\$144,000,000, while Gen. Worthington of
Ohio says that in that State there are
18,000,000 acres of land, inclosed with
45,000 miles of fence, at a prime cost of
\$115,000,000, and a yearly expense for
interest and repairs of nearly \$8,000,000.
Nicholas Biddle, in his time, estimated that
the "fence tax" of Pennsylvania was \$10,-
000,000 per year. Assuming these estimates
to be approximately correct, and estimating
the first cost of fences of other states on the
same basis, we have, in the whole country,
the vast sum of \$1,300,000,000. This, how-
ever, requires to be renewed every ten years,
giving \$130,000,000 as the annual cost, to
which should be added at least half as much
for repairs, making a total of \$195,000,000
as the aggregate national expense—a sum
I believe below the actual figures, yet almost
beyond comprehension. And bear in mind
that this is only the direct cost; the indirect
waste which they inflict is almost as great.

Why cannot a large portion of this out-
lay be saved for some profitable investment?
I believe that it can, and that the practical
answer can be found in fencing our cattle in,
instead of out. There is no doubt that our
people now expend four times as much
money to fence stock out as would be re-
quired to fence it in. Our present custom,
which commands universal fencing, is the
worst blunder the practical American people
ever made. Enterprising and original in
most matters, they are here following slav-
ishly, generation after generation, the prac-
tice of the earliest English colonies—follow-
ing it, though very expensive and incon-
venient, because it is the "good old way."
Europe has learned a more rational method,
and America will inevitably follow, for
economy, good taste, thorough tillage, fair
play and good sense command it, and the
time is not far distant when the absence of
farm fences will be accepted as a sign of
progressive culture. PROGRESS.

Bellefonte, Pa. July 30, 1875.

To the Pub. Com. of the Centre Farmer:

GENTLEMEN:—In a recent number of
your paper, which happened accidentally to
come under my observation while tempor-
arily sojourning in this goodly rural city,
my eye fell upon an article entitled

"Fences," in which the writer asks the
very pertinent question, "Is it possible to
dispense with the fences entirely?" Al-
though not engaged in farming at the pres-
ent time, I have been, and hope soon to be
again, and was pleased to notice this refer-
ence to a subject so important to all farmers,
and on which I had failed to bestow any
considerable thought or attention. In dis-
cussing the subject with a friend a few days
after having seen your paper, my attention
was directed to an article from a Virginia
correspondent of the N. Y. Tribune, which
seems to me to be an excellent answer to
your query, and I take the liberty of enclos-
ing it to you, in the hope that the thorough
discussion of the subject may result in ma-
terially reducing the expenses, and entirely
doing away with some of the annoyances of
our farming community.

Be good enough to send a copy of your
next issue to my address as per enclosed
card, and much oblige,

Yours, &c. J. C. F.
Williamsport, Pa., Aug. 3, 1875.

THE LAW OF FENCES.—I often notice
apparently conflicting decisions of learned
judges in regard to "the law of fences," and
it looks very odd to a young post-bellum
farmer in this reconstructed Dominion that
as inanimate and harmless a thing as a fence
should need any legislation at all, either as
regards the right to which it should grow,
or the kind of material of which it should
consist. Here in Virginia we have, very
wisely, I think, changed all that. As the
war left no fences in many sections, we
have done away with all legislation in re-
gard to them, and now simply require every
man to be responsible for the keeping and
good behavior of his own animals, from
children to chickens, and liable to pay for
all trespasses. Every man is at liberty to
build fences around his crops or not as he
chooses, but is compelled to see that his cat-
tle do no injury to his neighbors. As a con-
sequence, any poor freedman can rent or
purchase land in any section as destitute of
fences as of fencing material, and set in to
farming with entire protection from his
neighbors' cattle. The complicated laws
about fences are as obsolete as those about
slavery. And why should they not be? Does
not common law and common sense say let
every man raise whatever animals he
chooses, but make him responsible for their
proper restraint either in fences or cages?
Would not such laws simplify matters very
much and save a vast amount of expense
and litigation to the farmers, to say nothing
of the equanimity it would afford the judi-
cial minds of the country, so often per-
plexed about "the law of fences?" The
agricultural interests demand a new depart-
ure from the old Fence law system, which
did well enough 50 years ago, but which
should now become obsolete. It is my opin-
ion, formed from experience, that nothing
would give a greater impetus to the agricul-
tural interests of the country than the doing
away with all laws in regard to fences; let
the harmless crops have a full, free breath,
and require every man to be responsible for
the good behavior of all his animals, from
the pet lamb to the sheep-killing hound.—
[J. V. B., Halifax Co., Va.]

THE GRANGERS AND THE BIRDS.—The
Patrons of Randolph County (Missouri)
Council have adopted the following:

WHEREAS, It is a conceded fact by all
persons interested in the agricultural pros-
perity of the country that birds are the most
effective destroyers of insects, which are
becoming so alarmingly numerous as to en-
danger all the products of the soil; there-
fore be it

Resolved, That we, the members of the
Randolph County Grange, hereby pledge
ourselves to use our efforts to prevent the
destruction of birds in our vicinity, and we
hereby request all persons interested in the
welfare of the country to assist us in putting
a stop to the practice of killing birds, by
the enforcing of the law, whenever parties
are found trespassing.

Such concerted action as this, and in
just such matters as this, constitutes one
of the greatest, among the many benefits
of the Grange. This is sensible, and has
a practical twang to it.