

never preserved here.—The experiment of boiling the flax, instead of watering it, seemed to answer in this parish.

Fuel.—As to fuel, some parts of the parish abound with moss grounds, which furnish the contiguous farmers with plenty of peats. Other places, particularly the town of Wick, lie two or three miles distant from moss. Providing this article of peats takes up the farmer during the greater part of the summer season, and, in bad years, a part of the harvest also; and yet in a wet season, many are very ill supplied. This mode of getting fuel proves very hurtful to husbandry, as a farmer could much more profitably employ his carts in making dunghills for his lands; a garron load of peats on crubans is sold in Wick, at a penny. Each horse carries only about ten or twelve peats. Ten or twelve of these loads will scarcely fill an ordinary cart. To the poor tenant making peats is an unprofitable occupation, and to the buyer they are undoubtedly dear. The burgh is so sensible of this inconvenience, that they and the neighbourhood are coming more and more into the practice of burning coals. But Caithness and the other northern counties labour under a grievous burden, that most unreasonable duty on coals water-born, which, however, there is now a prospect of soon being freed from.

Crops.—Very little land is here employed in raising artificial or sown grasses, but there is a good deal of common meadow grass. Mr Dunbar of Hempriggs has from 12 to 14 acres under clover and rye-grass, though winter herding has not yet been fully established. There are a few acres of sown grass in the open fields between Wick and Staxigoe, and about eight acres more in the possession of the minister. Few deal in green crops. A small quantity of turnips may

be sown in some places, but potatoes are cultivated by all. Probably if the practice of green crops became general, it would be more beneficial than the ordinary rotation of bear and oats alternately, which is the practice of Caithness. Two thirds of the arable land is generally sown with a mixture of black and grey oats, which is found to answer better, and to yield more plentiful returns, than white oats. March and April is the usual seed time for oats, but sometimes they are sown so late as the beginning of May. The other part of the land is laid down in bear, the earliest about the beginning of May, and continuing till the middle of June. In some places, this article has been sown as late as the 18th or 20th of June, and yet has produced a plentiful crop, though of inferior quality. In warm lying places, bear has been known to be in the ground only about ten weeks from the sowing to the reaping time; a proof of very quick vegetation.

Run rig — A pernicious custom still too much prevails in this and other places, of possessing land in what is called *rig and rennal*, or run-rig, that is to say, each tenant, in a particular farm or district, has a ridge alternately with his neighbours. This is necessarily attended with confusion and disputes, and is a practice requiring to be abolished. It is thought to have taken place in times of barbarity, as a preservative against one neighbour setting fire to the field of another, if inimically disposed, and to make them all equally anxious to resist the enemy, in case of invasion *.

Popish Chapels, &c. — The remains of some popish chapels are still extant. At Thrumster there is a ruin of one, surrounded

* This parish is abundantly able to supply itself with provisions of all kinds. There is a weekly market every Friday in the town