

LOCKED OUT OF CHURCH

CONGREGATION IN CON- FLICT WITH PASTOR.

Report of an Unpleasant Occurrence
at Beachburg Anglican Church,
Rev. Mr. Peck, Pastor.

Toronto, July 27.—The Mattawa correspondent of the News says:—It is reported here that on Sunday evening last Rev. Mr. Peck, of Beachburg, who has charge of the new stone English church, Westmeath, on reaching his church, found the doors and windows securely locked and fastened, thus preventing his entry into the building. Seizing a stick of scantling he vainly pounded on the doors, and after having exhausted his efforts he secured a crowbar and having smashed the doors he obtained entrance to the sacred edifice. His congregation consisted of one lady.

The Cause.

The circumstances leading to this action on the part of the clergyman originated in his refusal to allow the funeral services to be held in the church over the body of the late William Bromley early this year, as the friends of the deceased did not produce a burial certificate. Since that time the members of the congregation have gradually ceased attending, and last Sunday the sexton was instructed by the church wardens not to open the church nor allow the clergyman to have the key.

Excitement has been aroused in the village and a meeting has been called to consider the line of action to be taken in regard to the minister's action, which is considered by the community to be an outrage on the new church.

Mr. Peck, it is said, had a somewhat similar experience at Smith's Falls, having been locked out of his church in that town last year.

REV. MR. PECK EXPLAINS

THE TROUBLE IN WEST- MEATH ANGLICAN CHURCH.

Claims He Was Misrepresented. The
Facts as to the Closing of the
Church Doors.

Editor Journal.—Your issue of Journal, July 27th, publishes a malicious statement of occurrences said to have happened in connection with Westmeath church, calculated to prejudice me in the eyes of the public, by placing my ministerial acts in a damaging light. It is due to me, therefore, that you should publish also this following reply:—

Considerable unpleasantness existed on the part of the Westmeath congregation and its late pastor, I might say pastors, when I came into the parish, which I was induced to do, urged by a number of my brother clergymen, and by the approval of the bishop. Your correspondent incorrectly states the causes of further disagreeableness on the part of some of the same congregation to the effect, that "I refused to allow the funeral services to be held in the church over the body of the late William Bromley early this year, as the friends of the deceased did not produce a burial certificate."

The first part of this statement is absolutely untrue, and the very reverse is what actually took place.

No burial certificate was produced as required by the burial act. I therefore, with every consideration for the affliction of the family performed the whole of my part of the ceremony in the church for them—telling of the requirements of the act as my reason for being able to proceed no further, and leaving to themselves the responsibility of interring the body in the ground. My course of action has been bitterly resented by the Bromleys and their friends by refusing to enter the church again from that day; but a faithful few of the congregation have continued their attendance up to Sunday last, when eight persons presented themselves at the church for service, but were unable to gain admittance as heretofore.

The key, I learned, was in the hands of a Roman Catholic named Gagnon, who had been caretaker to the church, but was discharged from his position, but still retained the key. I sent a messenger for it, and it was refused. I then went for it myself and was refused it, and I ascertained on the authority of the father of the late churchwarden, Thos. Mansell.

After considerable trouble I managed to force the fastenings and opened the doors of the church and duly held the appointed service.

Next day, but one, I received a letter from Mr. Mansell saying that he had been entirely misunderstood by Gagnon, and had no intention of depriving me of the key when I required it.

I desire to remonstrate against both the sensational style of your correspondent's paragraph and the mischievous turn that has been given to the whole report, and desire to express my opinion that it is a scandalous perversion of the real circumstances of the case, and no credit to the paper in which it appears. Our local Cobden "Sun" refused space to a one-sided paragraph without knowing something of the circumstances on the opposite side, in an attempted paper agitation—a discretion worthy of imitation.

I have a very difficult duty to perform in ministering to the Westmeath congregation as well as in the performance of my duty of citizenship in that part, and I object to being held up to public notoriety and reprobation for simply doing what I am bound to do by every worthy consideration. I shall be glad to have some apology from your paper for the misrepresentations you have given publicity to in your paper to which I have subscribed several years.

Yours truly,

EDWARD PECK,
Incumbent.

Westmeath.

Note.—The item referred to was not from the Journal's correspondent. The item was printed first in the Toronto News, and was sent by its correspondent. If the Journal's republication of the item has done Mr. Peck any injustice the Journal extends its regrets to Mr. Peck.