

## Road To Divorce England 1530 1987

*Case studies demonstrate how marriages were dissolved in England before the first Divorce Act became law in 1857*

**Lawrence Stone is one of the world's foremost historians. In such widely acclaimed volumes as *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England* and *The Open Society*, he has shown himself to be a provocative and engaging writer as well as a master chronicler of English family life. Now, with *Road to Divorce*, Stone examines the complex ways in which English men and women have used, twisted, and defied the law to deal with marital breakdown. Despite the infamous divorce of Henry VIII in 1529, Britons before the 20th century were predominantly, in Stone's words, "a non-divorcing and non-separating society." In fact, before divorce was legalized in 1857, England was the only Protestant country with virtually no avenue for divorce on the grounds of adultery, desertion, or cruelty. Yet marriages did fail, and in *Road to Divorce*, Stone examines a goldmine of court records—in which witnesses speak freely about love, sex, adultery, and marriage—memoirs, correspondence, and popular imaginative works to reveal how lawyers and the laity coped with marital discord. Equally important, in tracing the history of divorce, Stone has discovered a way to recapture the slow, irregular, and tentative evolution of moral values concerning relations between the sexes as well as the consequent shift from concepts of patriarchy to those of sexual equality. He thus offers a privileged, indeed almost unique, insight into the interaction of the public spheres of morality, religion, and the law. Written by the foremost historian of family life, *Road to Divorce* provides the first full study of a topic rich in historical interest and contemporary importance, one that offers astonishingly frank and intimate insights into our ancestors' changing views about what makes and breaks a marriage.**

*This book sets out to test the traditional view that for centuries English landed society has been open to new families made rich by business or public office.*

*American family law makes two key assumptions: first, that the civil state possesses sole authority over marriage and divorce; and second, that the civil law may contain only one regulatory regime for such matters. These assumptions run counter to the multicultural and religiously plural nature of our society. This book elaborates how those assumptions are descriptively incorrect, and it begins historical interpretation is enriched but not determined by grand theories in the social sciences and, as Stone elegantly argues, one where the upheavals of the seventeenth century are central to the very story of modernity. This Routledge Classics edition includes a new foreword by Clare Jackson, Trinity Hall, Cambridge.*

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