Lifecycle

Extract from Professor W.M. Jacob & Dr Frances Knight on Lifecycle

Marriage
The same legislation that permitted civil registration of births also enabled couples seeking marriage to choose from a greater range of options, including marrying in the Church of England with banns or licence, marrying in church on production of a certificate from a registrar, marrying in front of a registrar with no religious ceremony, or marrying in a non-Anglican place of worship. This represented a very great change in the marriage law, and it was one which required considerable adjustment on the part of both couples and clergy. Marriage in the parish church remained a popular option, and it was often also cheaper than the alternatives. The growth of densely populated, urban parishes created new challenges for the clergy (see Urbanization: Religion and the City), as they had to try to ensure that the people who applied to them were genuinely eligible. Divorce was all but impossible in this period, and bigamy was not unknown. Between 1835 and 1907, it was illegal for a man to marry his sister-in-law, if his first wife died. So called 'deceased wife's sister' marriages had been common in the early part of the nineteenth century, but by the 1830s they were being seen as a form of incest.

Burial
Burial would take place either in the parish church yard, or, as grave yards became full, in a municipal cemetery. Burial of the dead in distant cemeteries broke the ancient and important link between the worshipping community inside the church, and the deceased former members of that community who were at rest in the churchyard, but it became necessary for reasons of public health. The creation of new burial grounds often caused strain between Anglicans and Nonconformists, and it was usual for a dividing line to be drawn, and for the bishop to consecrate just one portion of the ground. It was not until 1880 that the stranglehold of burial services according to the Book of Common Prayer was lifted. In that year the Burials Act permitted Nonconformists to bury their dead for the first time with their own form of words. The Church of England's virtual monopoly of important aspects of the lifecycle was being finally ended.

Advertisement for a funeral bier "especially suited to country parishes" which could be wheeled then carried, saving the expense of a hearse.
Origin/Date: 1882
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