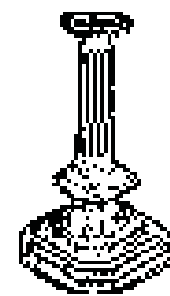


A Silvertale by PDS(terling)



When I was in Law School, one of the cases we had to read involved one of London's most highly-reputed London silversmiths. The case was decided as far back as 1722 and is still "good" law.

The facts of the case revealed that a chimney sweep found a diamond ring and took it to the silversmith's shop to find out what it was. The silversmith gave it to his apprentice who, under the pretence of weighing it, stole the diamond and then told the silversmith that it was worth 3 halfpence. The silversmith offered that amount but the sweep refused the offer and insisted on having the ring back. The apprentice gave back the socket without the diamond.

Some time later, the silversmith was sued by the sweep in an action to recover the diamond or its value. The silversmith lost 100%. He was ordered by the Court to pay to the chimney sweep what a jewel of the "finest water" that would fit the socket would be worth.

It must have been a great blow for the silversmith to pay so heavily for his apprentice's delinquency. However, Lord Chelmsford in *Wentworth v Lloyd* said that the silversmith was regarded in "an odious light." Lord Eldon LC in *Lupton v White* observed that the silversmith's act was "dishonest" and that he should have "refrained from placing the transaction in that state."

Whilst the output from the silversmith's shop was said to be enormous, he only employed two assistants. It is difficult to accept that the boss did not see the apprentice acting feloniously. Also, he should have ordered him to hand back the diamond when the sweep found it was missing. Failing that, he could have sacked the apprentice and reimbursed the sweep for the lost jewel to avoid the protracted court proceedings which involved "several of the trade being examined" to prove the value of the best diamond.

Our silversmith's reputation did not suffer much. His business was most successful and his silver now commands top prices — even more than monogrammed caviar! For example, in 1980,

an engraved tray by this silversmith fetched US\$192,500 and in 1981 a coffee pot brought US\$42,900. He is represented in the National Gallery Victoria. Thanks to the Felton Bequest, a pair of waiters was bought in 1924 and a silver-gilt chamber candlestick in 1934.

Note, however, that there is none of his work in the collection of silver at Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle...



He made a variety of things: tea caddies, ewers, mustard pots, epergnes, inkstands, bread baskets, spoons, ladles etc. And he made many pieces for the Russian Imperial Court and members of the British Parliament. In 1716 he became a goldsmith to George I.

The silversmith entered 3 marks with the crowned star over and the fleur-de-lis below, incised, as follows:



When the first mark was entered, the law required the first two letters of the surname. With the Act of 1739, all makers were required to include the initials of the first name and the surname.



A silver tea caddy made in 1724 by Paul deLamerie, 13.3cm high, 439gr.



Early George II two-bottle cruet frame by Paul deLamerie, London 1728 13.9cm wide, 410gr.

And the name of this well-known case?

Armory v Paul DeLamerie