Written for the KENT NEWS.

An Historical Sketch of Windsor Castle.

LONDON, ENG., August 2, 1895.

This favorite residence of Queen Victoria, of England, is beautifully situated on a commanding site about one-quarter of a mile from the town of the same name. In the neighborhood are two other notable and interesting places, Eton college, and a little more distant, is Stoke Pogis cemetery, the theme of the poet Grey in his immortal verses—"An elegy upon a country churchyard."

Windsor is much visited by tourists and certain parts are open to inspection, but are not all of great interest. For instance, the state apartments shown are not those now in use, and are dismantled, except there are some fine paintings, chiefly portraits, on the walls and some cabinets containing fine china. The elegant upholstered furniture, in summer at least, is covered in linen and the carpets are off the floors and rolled up. The chief attractions are the river from the windows, the fine terraces, the magnificent royal chapel and the massive buildings that compose "The Chapel."

The early name of Windsor was "Windleshore" from the winding course of the river Thames at that point. King Edward, the Confessor presented this royal estate to the monks of Westminster Abbey. William, the Conqueror, purchased it from the monks to build a royal residence which should be a castle or stronghold in the center of his domain. Henry the 1st and Henry the 2nd enlarged the first building and Edward the 3rd, who was born in the old Castle, had it demolished and replaced by a new one. Succeeding monarchs added new portions and George the 4th commenced extensive improvements, which were only completed in the reign of the present Queen. At the present day Windsor Castle stands one of the most commodious and magnificent royal homes in the world. The Castle consists of two courts on rising ground, called the upper and lower "wards," surrounded by substantial stone buildings. Opposite the entrance is "St. George's Chapel" belonging to the order of the "Knights of the Garter," commenced in 1474 by Edward the 4th on the site of a preceding one built by Henry the 1st but only finished in the reign of Henry the 8th. This and the Albert memorial are alone well worth a visit from London to Windsor Castle.

In St. George Chapel near the entrance is a handsome cenotaph to the French "Prince Imperial" with a recumbent figure in marble which Queen Victoria ordered. In another corner, called the "Beaufort Chapel," is an elaborate sarcophagus with a recumbent marble effigy of the Queen's father, the late "Duke of [illegible] ed "Prince Consort." The rich decoration of the interior is almost indescribable. Colored marble of the finest kind, mosaics, sculpture, precious gems and gilding are here in the greatest profusion. The ceiling is in mosaics and enamel, representing angels with devices relating to Prince Albert. In the chancel are shields, supported by angels, symbolizing the passion of our Savior. At one end are exquisite angels representing "Life and Death." The floor is of different colored marble, 28 different tints being used in this small but sumptuous building. The "recess" represents the "Resurrection" and is inlaid with "Malachite," "Lapis lazuli," "Porphyry" and other very costly substances. In the center of this lovely memorial building is the marble cenotaph of the Prince bearing his recumbent figure. Nearer the door is another sarcophagus with recumbent figure in white marble of the young "Duke of Albany" in the dress of a Scotch Highlander, who died in 1884.

These cenotaphs are decorated with pricely carved figures in "bas-relief" of exquisite design and execution. Among these figures is the queen, kneeling with head bowed over an altar for prayer, enveloped in a veil. The view from the top of the Round Tower or Keep is a grand one at Windsor Castle, embracing a scope of 12 counties, the site is so commanding. The principal entrance is only used by the royal equipages. The state apartments that visitors are shown contain some interesting paintings, but the guide conducts his party so hurriedly that there is little satisfaction in going through. Many visitors go, also, thro' the mows or royal stables at Windsor, and once it is rather interesting, but a repetition is not worth the time and fatigue. We were told these mows cost £70,000 to build, $280,000.

In the valley of the Thames river the old Normans built two strongholds, London Tower and the Round Tower of Windsor. William, the Conqueror, chose his places well.

Many are the natural advantages of Windsor. The hill upon which the castle is built commands the surrounding country for miles, and near at hand is a stretch of grand primeval forest trees, among which, at an earlier day, wild game for the chase abounded.

The "Round Tower" is the central "Keep" or fortress, around it are spacious stone buildings for the use of the royal occupants, and no better example exists, at the present day, of the ancient feudal "castle." Many of these English strongholds date back to the era of our common ancestry, so that we Americans of the younger nation feel that we, too, have a share, or children's birthright, in these proofs of our forefather's greatness, and naturally take a deep interest and pride in these grand, old historical places. Like other castles, Windsor has its prison horrors, used in an age now happily passed. In one of these strong towers King John of France languished through many weary hours after his disastrous defeat at the battle of Poictiers, and he became the prisoner of the valiant young "Black Prince." Nearly opposite is the tower where James of Scotland was illegally detained a captive for nearly 20 long years by Henry the VI, of England. His captors were kind to him, and he was allowed as much liberty as was possible, with forcible detention from his kingdom and throne.

While in England James of Scotland acquired many accomplishments as a courtly knight, and shone pre-eminently for education among his cotemporaries. Upon his return at last to his own country he made his reign illustrious and met a hard and undeserved fate, in his tragic assassination. In the time of Cromwell's supremacy, Windsor's beautiful Chapel and grand State apartments were ruthlessly despoiled by the common soldiery. Events of entirely opposite character are often celebrated at Windsor for it contains the tombs, as well as the homes of England's royal families.

Most frequently of late, however have the joy bells rang for marriages and births. Here in proud pomp Queen Elizabeth, and here Queen Anne received the news from her victorious "General Marlboro" of the great victory over her enemies at the battle of Blenheim. The glowing and forbidding look of a fortress does no longer belong to the aspect of Windsor Castle, rather as a grand palace and secure abode of wealth. It would be difficult to capture this home of royalty even now. An additional proof of its being able to withstand a long seige was discovered lately in finding out why a certain apartment in the "Keep" could never be made warm enough in winter even with a good fire, and always remained cool in summer. Part of the flooring being taken up, revealed a vast circular stone with iron rings, and when this stone was lifted a deep and carefully constructed Norman well was found, going down to the river Thames. Although the public are not admitted into all portions of Windsor Castle, the visitor cannot fail to be interested in the history of this, the grandest palace, and one of the most ancient fortresses of our mother country.

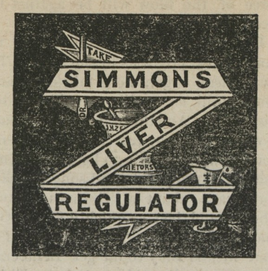
Some of the Colonial Associations are curious. Here the two arrow heads had to be annually presented to the Crown as a tribute from Lord Baltimore for his proprietary rights in the province of Maryland. Here, too, were the two beaver skins, annually to be delivered as tribute by the Penns of Pennsylvania for their proprietary rights. In 1753 an old paper recites that these 2 arrow heads and beaver skins were respectfully "yielded" and paid pursuant to the restoration contained in the royal grants of said provinces. Windsor contains but 13 acres, these royal grants, for which tribute was paid, covered an area of 130,000 square miles in America. A striking example of the relative size of the mother country, and her American colonies.

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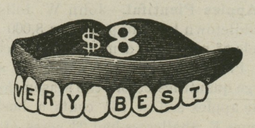
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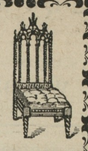
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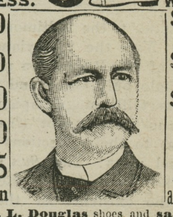
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