

about the baby's ancestors. On both sides the royal infant could claim a grand pedigree. Her father was the son of the reigning monarch, and could trace back his descent through a long line of Kings and Princes, to Alfred the Great. Her mother's family, the Coburgs, showed an unbroken descent for nine hundred years from a Saxon Earl, Theodoric. A notable man amongst these Coburg ancestors was Frederic the Wise, Elector of Saxony, one of the first German Princes to accept the doctrine of the Reformation, and a powerful protector of Martin Luther. About a hundred years previously there had been another Elector, Frederic of Saxony, who had his two children kidnapped by a rebel knight. But the children were recovered, and the rescue was chiefly due to the exertions of a brave charcoal-burner who, with the pole used in his business, fiercely belaboured the rebel knight. For this day's services, the right of cutting from the royal forests such wood as they needed in their business operations was granted to the charcoal-burner and his heirs for ever, as well as a nice farm and an annual allowance of corn. All these privileges are still (or were till very lately) enjoyed by the descendants of the charcoal-burner. "Our Gracious Queen" is twelfth in descent in a direct line from Ernest, the elder of the two kidnapped and rescued children.

When Princess Victoria first saw the light in Kensington Palace, it was by no means a certainty