

mentioned Spencer married in due time a fair and virtuous damsel named Judith [daughter of Sir Robert Booth], a woman beloved and esteemed by her own and her husband's family, and justly considered as the paragon of her day, for every grace and accomplishment, and every domestic and social virtue. Above all, she stood unrivalled in the sweetness and gentleness of her disposition, of which I have heard many of her descendants, and indeed all who knew her, speak with delight and amazement. To the above-mentioned Spencer Cowper this peerless lady bore four children—viz., three sons and one daughter, the latter the counterpart of herself in all her virtues and graces, but excelling her in respect of genius, which early showed itself in an elegant taste for poetry, many proofs of which are now extant, though she never would allow of their being printed. The three sons which the above-mentioned admirable and virtuous lady bore to Spencer Cowper, were named William, John and Ashley. The eldest, William, possessed an estate in Hertfordshire near Cole Green, the seat of Earl Cowper. John, the second, went into the Church, and was for a long series of years Rector of Berkhamstead. He was the father of the poet. Ashley, the youngest brother, was intended for the law, but quitted the profession, and became Clerk to the Parliaments after the decease of his eldest brother who enjoyed it during his life, it having been a grant from the Crown to his father. Ashley left behind him only three daughters with small portions and few talents!—one of whom, having not yet quite lost her memory, has written the above account for the benefit of those who may want hereafter to be instructed in the history, or rather to have a sketch of the House of Cowper.

In 1795 Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were removed to Norfolk, in order that they might be under the immediate care of Mr. Johnson. Mrs. Unwin died in 1796, but for a time the poet seems to have improved in bodily health and mental activity. In the summer of 1798, Johnny was thinking of taking his cousin to the east coast for change of air. Lady Hesketh, like most other people at that period, was full of apprehension of the long-threatened French invasion, and writes in June 1798:

I understand from his [Cowper's] letter that you meant to take him to the seaside—is not that a hazardous step at this critical time, when the Toulon fleet has certainly say'd, and no one knows its destination? Your Eastern Coast has always been considered to be in danger, though on what side they are to attack us, or whether they are to attack us at all, is, I believe, known only to themselves; but sure enough I should be grieved at heart should any of these wretches land in your neighbourhood. I hope our dear Cousin does not see the newspapers, and does not know either the dangers we are in, or the