SIDELIGHTS

THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS IN BALTIMORE, 1783-1785: as seen in the Letterbook of Johnson, Johonnot, and Co.

By RHODA M. DORSEY

On December 23, 1783, the Maryland Journal carried the following advertisement:

HENRY JOHNSON

has opened a STORE under the firm of JOHNSON, JOHONNOT, AND CO.

The lowest store on Mr. Jesse Hollingsworth's Wharf, where they have for sale,

CORDAGE, SMALL CABLES FOR VESSELS OF

40 or 50 tons; Madeira, Teneriffe, Lisbon & Calcavella WINES; London Porter, in Casks; Bohea Tea, per Chest; West-India Rum; New England Rum, in Barrels & Tierces; Liver-oil; Mackerel; pickeled Cod; pickled Salmon; cheese; half-bushels; Cedar Buckets; Iron-Ware; Tea-Kettles; Skillets &c and a Number of other Articles.—CASH OR COUNTRY PRODUCE will be taken for those Articles.—

Whiteoak Hogshead and Barrel Staves and Heading are WANTED—Also Two handsome Figure-Heads for small Vessels completely painted & decorated.

This was the first public announcement of the opening of the Baltimore branch of the Boston firm of Johnson, Johonnot, and Co. The three members of this firm, Henry Johnson and Francis and George Johonnot, were probably half-brothers and the third generation of a Huguenot family of merchants and distillers.¹ Previous experience at sea and in trade made Henry Johnson, the eldest brother, familiarly referred to as "The Captain," the leading spirit in the firm. His half-brother Francis Johonnot, then aged 29, was an expert distiller, and seems to have assumed responsibility for running the family distillery in Boston after the death of his father in 1775. George Johonnot, aged 27, was the junior member

¹ This paragraph is based on material found in *The New England Historical and Geneological Register*, VII (Boston, 1853), 141-44 and in the Johnson Johonnot Letterbook in the Md. Hist. Soc., hereafter cited as JJLB.