certainly have it in your power to supply the Continent with Molasses & Sugar on better terms than the Americans. . . .[18]

None of these letters brought the house any foreign business during the years covered by the letterbook; the bulk of their connections was on the continent, and particularly with New England.

Extending New England connections was by no means an easy task. Henry wrote more dutifully than optimistically to the major merchants of Boston, Beverly, Portsmouth, and Providence trading to the south. But he admitted to Thomas Halsey of Providence, "We cannot presume to sollicit your Business as you have several Gentlemen here from your Town who we suppose you would prefer" [19] and commented ruefully to his brother, "You cannot expect to wean those Salem people from Carey & co. it is a good house and rich." [21]

Among smaller, newer merchants the firm clearly had more chance of success. Henry therefore urged his brothers to make the firm known to the North End bakers in Boston, and he undertook to meet all the New England captains in Baltimore. Once he bribed a captain from Cape Cod who entered port unassigned to place his cargo with the firm, and he offered his services without charge and often without enthusiasm to captains whose ignorance was a sore temptation.

I shall give him some little assistance to endeavour to get ourselves established in the Eyes of these people—The said Captain is the damnest fool I ever saw—I have a great mind to milk him don't know but I shall— [21]

Once a connection had been established, the firm did all in its power to keep its clients with profitable transactions of their business and a constant stream of letters from Henry and then George. These dealt with specific business affairs and general economic conditions, but frequently carried additional counsel about cargoes, ships, or captains. George wrote a Boston firm about one of their captains,

while altho a married man, he was to frequently with lasses of easy virtue & neglected his duty . . . he stopt at Annapolis on his way out and with a fair wind to see a Doctor & get medicine after which he was so bad as to be unable to stand the Decke & we fear he has put in somewhere till he is cured.[22]

To another firm he suggested a more profitable line of trade:

Great Voyages have been made in bringing Redemptioners & Servants from Ireland & Germany—We are credibly informed that the Ship Revolution belonging to Messrs Cabot of Beverly clear'd them 1300 Gu[inea]s from Ostend by bringing Servants.[23]

Letters never failed to stress the diligent pursuit of the correspondent's interests, as when Henry Johnson declared to Daniel Sargent, "We shall

[18] Henry Johnson to James Dimice, Cape Francois, November 8, 1783, JJLB.
[19] Henry Johnson to Thomas Halsey, April 4, 1784, JJLB.
[20] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, April 13, 1784, JJLB.
[21] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, March 16, 1784, JJLB.
[22] George Johonnot to McLure and Boies, December 25, 1784, JJLB.
[23] George Johonnot to Searle and Tyler, December 9, 1784, JJLB.