The bachelor captain was even reduced to thoughts of matrimony, writing to Francis, ". . . as you say those Infernal cold nights are rather too bad to lay alone." [38]

No one greeted the end of winter more gratefully than Henry and George who had arrived in mid March. On March 25 the ice broke and Henry reported,

> Seventy Sail or Ships & smaller Vessels came up yesterday to Fell's Point, & part of them to the Basin. We broke thro' the Ice to get some of them up to the County Wharfe, it at present is 8 inches thick in the Basin. . . .[39]

With the opening of the harbor, a sloop that Henry had loaded in January finally got free, and he reported to his impatient brother, "As to the sloop, she is at length sailed. You should have asked God Almighty not me, how she came so long froze up." [40]

It soon became apparent, however, that the resumption of trade brought its own problems to the Baltimore commission merchant. The "seventy sail" and more landed their goods, glutted the market and made profitable sales out of the question. Loading with flour and bar iron, they soon stripped the town of these commodities at a time when bad roads made it difficult to get more from the country. As usual, money became scarcer and scarcer. Trying to sell cargoes from New England and the West Indies and load the ships consigned to them, Henry and George found themselves low on cash, low on flour, but high on rum and unpaid bills. Complaints began to fill their letters:

> We have little to say except on the subject of the scarcity of moneys in this country. Not above half enough for the Trade & hardly that . . . that we are entirely stagnated as to Business. Very little is done except Vendues. Goods are sold for nothing. . . .[41]
>
> We find it impossible to collect Cash from the retailers after we have trusted them. . . . If we had not two or three freinds we should be obliged to hang ourselves.[42]

Faced with such problems, Henry and George stored their fish, molasses, and rum; ordered flour shipped from Philadelphia; cursed the general situation; and clung to the forlorn hope that at least these conditions would get rid of foreign merchants, for "Our Vendue's ruin the merchts but we think it is impossible for the European Adventurers to stand long among us at the Rate their goods are sold there." [43]

The troubles of the firm were heightened by the fact that many shipments from New England were of poor quality. Despite Henry's repeated urging that only good produce be sent to Baltimore, he received low grade fish; fish barrels packed with shad on either end and menhaden, an unpopular fish in Baltimore, in the middle; and such bad rum that he was led to remonstrate with their biggest correspondent:

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[38] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, March 1, 1784, JJLB.
[39] Henry Johnson to Stephen Higginson, March 25, 1784, JJLB.
[40] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, March 25, 1784, JJLB.
[41] Henry Johnson to Daniel Sargent, April 24, 1784, JJLB.
[42] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, April 27, 1784, JJLB.
[43] Henry Johnson to Hewes and Anthony, May 8, 1784, JJLB.