The West India rum you shipped with us is so weak that one drop more water added to it would make only confort grog—I expect Every morning that I Come to the store to see it froze which makes the people turn up there noses. . . .[44]

The experience of this first winter and spring in Baltimore was so sobering to Henry that in May he took time to write a lengthy review of the firm's commission business on the theme of "General Imports Don't Pay."

. . . the hops are on hand & will neither fetch here or at any other market near the cost, the hollow ware is almost all on hand owing to immense quantities of a superior quality from England, the Porter still in hand & an inevitable loss must ensue from its bad quality & the little use of it here, the Jama rum still on hand & the same Kind selling at Auction for . . ., the Keggs going very slowly, the 3 hhds fish oblig'd to send to the Havanna, the Oyl still on hand, the Choce & most of the candles on hand, the Cheese we shall probably make something by, the Molls and first Rum will turn out well, setting them aside, on all those enumerated we are certain of a loss, which the profits on the other things will by no means, bring up. . . .[45]

Faced with such an unprofitable inventory, Henry proposed that the firm stop its general commission business and deal only in shipping flour at Baltimore and in distilling rum in Boston. Before Henry could do anything concrete with this plan, however, he was called to Boston by what appeared to be the fatal illness of Francis. Although Francis recovered, Henry remained in Boston and from mid May George was alone in Baltimore conducting the affairs of the house.

George had not been happy in Baltimore on his arrival. The weather proved so unexpectedly cold that at the end of April Henry repeated an urgent request to Francis, "George intreats you to send on his winter cloathes as he is certain he is got to the northward of Greenland where there is no Summer & you have unfortunately ship'd only his Summer Cloaths."[46] He missed his friends in Boston and was plagued by recurrent bouts of illness. Finding Baltimore decidedly lacking in comparison to Boston, he sent home for everything from signs to hay, from shoes to mattresses, convinced that the northern product was better and cheaper. In one letter he requested,

I have wore out your tooth brush & cannot buy one in the place, beg you will purchase 3 or 4 & bring or send on. . . . If you can, buy two proper Desk Knives that the blades are fix'd in the handles without Springs to open or shut, as we have lost several by their being pocketed.[47]

His opinion of Baltimoreans was as low as Henry's had been:

. . . there is no part of the continent where Industrious Mechanics of every kind meet with such encouragement as here particularly those who understand anything relating to a Vessell or its appendages, there is not a good Ships Carpenter in the place, those here are mere botchers & have such Wages as raises their fortunes in a few years. . . .[48]

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[44] Henry Johnson to John Bromfield, January 10, 1784, JJLB.
[45] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, May 4-7, 1784, JJLB.
[46] Henry Johnson to Francis Johonnot, April 28, 1784, JJLB.
[47] George Johonnot to Henry Johnson, July 27, 1784, JJLB.
[48] George Johonnot to Noah Parker, May 29, 1784, JJLB.