COLL^{rs} OFFICE

Portsm^{o} Sep. 1, 1804. 110

SIR
(The Comptroller)

By this day's mail I have rec^{d} your letter of the 23^{d} ULT^{o} stating an objection to an article of expense in my acc^{t} as Superintendent of the lighthouse establishment, viz. 200 dolls. paid B. C. Gilman for painting the shingles on the Lighthouse alledged to be an extravagant charge & that an adjustment if the account is suspended until the dimensions of the building shall be known - - & observing also on the propriety of a previous contract for work of this kind & that otherwise reasonable compensation for the labour was just. - -

As the objection thus stated implies a severe censure on the agent, I consider it proper to show that only a previous agreement was made for the work & the sum paid a very low one, but that great economy has been exercised in the transaction & to that end I shall take the liberty to observe further than merely a support of the charge made rendered necefsary - I would remark, however, that the officers of the Treasury who may have had the amo^{ts} before them from the want of the proper date wherein to form calculations may easily have misapprehended the charge - The dimensions of the Lighthouse formerly transmitted & which accompanied the contract forward since the Account in question was transmitted will show that this painting covered a superfill of pine shingling of upwards of six thousand square feet. -

In making a contract for a new Lighthouse (for which an appropriation was made, admitting only of 4300 Dolls. for the building) very proper means was resorted to by public notice & private correspondence to obtain proposals, a great no. were produced, 5 of the MOST favourable were transmitted to the Treasury - Among them (the lowest) was B. C. Gilman's for 4650 D^{s} including the painting of the Causway, which was accepted under such modifications as should reduce the contract to 4300 D^{s} - This modification admitted of no pofsible means of effecting the Contract but by leaving out the painting of the Causway - These were therefore dispensed with expecting that on the meeting of Congress a farther appropriation might be obtained for the purpose - In the mean time as the painting to preserve the building and the Causway to facilitate the pafsing a long the Isthmus over flowed at full SEA were necefsary - I endeavored to obtain proposals from other persons for their separate terms for those Jobbs - The lowest offered for the painting was 300 Dolls, & the like sum for the Causeway. -

On my representing to the Commifsion of the Revenue the propriety of having these objects accomplished & that probably the materials of the Old Lighthouse when taken down might be applied to the latter, I rec^{d} directions to cause the work$_{t}$ to be done & to charge the amount in my next quarterly Acco^{t} as superintendent - I accordingly applyed to Mr. Gilman & claimed his first proposal of 4650 dolls for the whole, thereby giving him only 350 for what I could find no offer at lefs than 600 D^{s} - On examination of the old Lighthouse it was found the materials would not answer to work into the Causeway & Mr. Gilman after some hesitation consented to undertake the 2 Jobbs for 350 dolls, his stages being still standing. - - when the work was

done I desired him to place the articles in his Acct sepa-
rately according to the cost of each to the 350 for the
whole, he accordingly stated the painted at 200 & the
Causeway at 150 asuring me that the cost of each was much
greater. -

For my farther satisfaction I have this day called on
Mr. Gray a reputable painter who had made the offer formerly
for an estimate of the cost of this painting to refresh my
recollection of his proposals of 300 dolls. , which he now
confirms & farther informs me that during the performance
of the painting by Mr. Gilman he visited the Lighthouse
which he had not examined so fully before & he afsures me
he could not have effected the painting without a lofs for
lefs than 375 dollars .

I consider the 350 dolls agreed for & paid to Mr.
Gilman for the painting of the shingles & the Causeway can-
not be departed from. I have neverthelefs written to him
& asked him to furnish me with a statement of the items
which compose these jobbs respectively, which I will enclose
you & for which purpose I will retain this letter a day or
two. -

I have also to observe further that in making my agree-
ment with Mr. Gilman first for the Lighthouse and afterwards
for the Causeway & painting the utmost attention was had to
the interest of the public, & I am persuaded no lower terms
could have been obtained.

I am Sir

GABRIEL DURALL, ESQ.

Sep. 5.

P.S. Having retained this letter for Mr. Gilman's
statement of the cost of the painting - I
now enclose his letter to me in which it is
contained & by which I find the 2 JOBBS exceed
the Contract 77 Doll[s] I apprehended it would
be much greater.