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Treasury Department,
Fifth Auditor's Office, April 15, 1841.

Sir,

I herewith enclose a Copy of a letter from James O'Brien, of Harrisburg Pennsylvania, and of a deposition of James Murphy, by which it appears that the son of Mr. O'Brien, about fifteen years of age, left the home of his parents at Harrisburg early in September last, and made his way to Baltimore; that he was immediately afterwards taken on board the Schooner Rising Sun by Captain Cottrell, of our Light Ship near Key West, and conveyed to Key West, was made to act as Cook on the passage by Captain Cottrell, and otherwise treated cruelly by him; that on their arrival at Key West Captain Cottrell had the boy conveyed to the Light Ship where he has ever since been detained against his will.

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(These are grave and serious charges against Captain Cottrell, and if they be true will prove him to be unfit for the service of the United States, in any capacity whatever. Indeed they constitute an offence which would subject him to severe punishment by any Court having cognizance of the case.

I transmit these papers with a request that you will lose no time in either going yourself to the Light Ship, or sending some person in whom you have full confidence to her, and ascertain whether the lad is on board. If he is on board you will cause him to be immediately liberated, carried to Key West, and by the first good opportunity to be returned to Baltimore and delivered to Henry Snyder Esq.r a Justice of the Peace there, or Anthony Keenan, South Street, No. 39, at the expense of Captain Cottrell. You will insist on Capt. Cottrell's paying all the expenses of the lad, and if you have paid him any sum as wages for this lad on board the Ship, you will deduct the same from Captain Cottrell's pay and hold it for the use of the lad's father. If the lad is not on board, you will compel Capt. Cottrell to find him and deliver him to you, if he be alive.

Having obtained possession of the lad you will enquire minutely into all the circumstances of the case, and particularly as to the reasons of Captain Cottrell for taking this lad on board his Vessel and conveying him to and compelling him to do duty on board the Light Ship; seeing that he was a minor and also that he was no seaman.

If there are no extenuating circumstances in the case, and I must confess I can perceive none, you will recommend a suitable man to

take his place on board the Light Ship.

As the parents of the lad are in great distress in contemplating his present situation, I must request you to act with the utmost promptitude in the case, and to report to me what you have done in regard to him. You will also report such defence as Capt: Cottrell may enter into, with your opinion as to the weight it ought or ought not to have.

Since the above was written I have referred to your account for December quarter, and find that you have paid Cottrell, on account of this very lad, John O'Brien, the sum of 79 76/100 dollars. You have no doubt paid him a similar sum for the services of this lad for the quarter ending 31st. March last, amounting together to 159 52/100 dollars. If you should have paid him for this last quarter, you will oblige him to return it, as well as that previously paid by you, and you will hold it subject to the order of this Office.

This entry in your account so fully corroborates the deposition of Murphy, as to the forcible detention of the lad, and proves so clearly that Cottrell seduced him on board the vessel at Baltimore for his own particular benefit, and imposed him upon us, though a boy, as a good and able seaman, and obtained wages for him as such, that it would be highly improper to continue Cottrell any longer on board the Light Vessel. I must enjoin it upon you therefore, after you shall have obtained the boy from him, and the necessary money to pay his expenses to Baltimore, as well as that you have paid him for the boy's wages, that you will suspend him from command and place the Light Vessel in charge of a person in whom you have full confidence, and recommend such person to the Secretary of the Treasury for a regular appointment.

I am, &c
S. Pleasonton

Adam Gordon Esq.
Superintendent of Lights,
Key West. Florida.

Treasury Department,
Fifth Auditor's Office, April 15, 1841.

Sir

The accounts of the undermentioned Superintendents of Lights, for the