

From the Eleventh Report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs on the Customs

For the year ending 31 December 1866

Substitution of a new steamer for the cutter 'Vigilant'

In consequence of the death, in the month of June 1865, of the Commander of the "Vigilant" cruizer, which, as your Lordships are aware, was, on the transfer of the Coast Guard to the Admiralty, placed under our orders to be used for the protection of the revenue in and at the mouth of the River "Thames", we called for a report upon the condition of the vessel, and, finding that the time had arrived when a considerable outlay must be made upon her to keep her in a seaworthy condition, we took the opinion of those of our officers who had had most experience on the river on the question whether any better arrangement could be made for the performance of the duty hitherto intrusted to the "Vigilant". We found that she had principally been employed at the mouth of the river or between the Nore and Gravesend, but that owing to the extension of the trade of the port additional protection to the revenue was much required between Gravesend and Deptford, which the "Vigilant", from her draught of water and from being a sailing vessel, was not so well calculated to afford as a small screw steamer would be, which could be always moving about, independent of wind and tide, and would follow in the wake of the large foreign steamers on their passage up the river to London, and so prevent attempts, which have not been uncommon, to unship or throw overboard contraband goods. Your Lordships having been pleased by your letters of 10th August and 10th September, in answer to our application, to sanction the supply of such a vessel, she was built by Messrs Dudgeon and Co of Millwall, and put into commission at the commencement of the current year (1867). We have every reason to believe that the arrangement will prove to be an economical one, and advantageous to the interests of the revenue. The "Vigilant" will be put up to public auction in the month of May next, and, being a first rate sailer and well known on the river, is expected to realize a considerable sum for the Crown.