

In fitting out the ships, not any expense was spared to render them competent to the service on which they were to be employed ; nor were any suggestions made by individuals neglected, whenever they were considered likely to contribute in any way to the accomplishment of the object in view. As it was supposed that merchant vessels would be better calculated for the service in question, than ships of war, on account of the former being better adapted for stowage, four vessels which had formerly been employed as transports were hired—their names and tonnage were as follow, viz. *Isabella*, of 368 tons ; *Dorothea*, of 380 tons ; *Alexander* of 252 tons ; and *Trent*, of 250 tons.

They were fortified in the strongest manner that wood and iron would admit, having, in the first place, the whole of their outside, from the keel to some distance above the water-line, covered with an extra lining of oak plank three inches thick : within they had a number of additional transverse beams and other timbers put into the hold, in order to be able to withstand the lateral pressure of the ice, in the event of their being caught between two fields of it. Their bows were also covered with strong plates of iron, to prevent them from receiving any damage by striking against the floating ice.

They were likewise fitted up inside in such a manner as to make the accommodations of both officers and men as comfortable as the size of the vessels would admit. To guard as much as possible against the rigour of the climate, we were provided with standing bed places, which, besides being much warmer than cots, or hammocks, possessed another advantage ; for, in the event of its being necessary for us to take up our quarters on shore, they might be easily removed, each bed-place consisting of a separate box. The ships were likewise supplied with as much coal as could be stowed : they were indeed ballasted with coals, so that the

quant  
to la  
effec  
had  
betw  
Arc  
mat  
we s  
the  
ther  
sort  
by  
wer  
stan

T  
equa  
sup  
the  
such  
prev  
mos  
nav

T  
con  
me  
and  
An  
art  
ma  
sup  
oth  
wh  
tro  
ne  
be  
ca  
ci