

ty-four hours. Notwithstanding this movement, the surface remained even and unbroken, except along the shore, where it cracked.

Had the continuance of this frost been anticipated, it would have been easy to keep open a passage ; but on the 1st of February, when the *Britannia* was appointed to sail, it was found that the ice was seven feet thick in the wharf, and two feet thick for a distance of seven miles out ; so that wagons and carts were conveying cotton and other freights from the shore to the edge of the ice, where ships were taking in their cargoes. No sooner was it understood that the mail was imprisoned, than the public spirit of the whole city was roused, and a large sum of money instantly subscribed for cutting a canal, seven miles long and 100 feet wide, through the ice. They began the operation by making two straight furrows, seven inches deep, with an ice plough drawn by horses, and then sawed the ice into square sheets, each 100 feet in diameter. When these were detached, they were made to slide, by means of iron hooks and ropes fixed to them, under the great body of the ice, one edge being first depressed, and the ropes being pulled by a team of horses, and occasionally by a body of fifty men. On the 3d of February, only two days after her time, the steamer sailed out, breaking through a newly-formed sheet of ice, two inches thick, her bows being fortified with iron to protect her copper sheeting. She burst through the ice at the rate of seven miles an hour without much damage to her paddles ; but before she was in clear water, all her guard of iron had been torn off. An eye-witness of the scene told me that tents had been pitched on the ice, then covered by a slight fall of snow, and a concourse of people followed and cheered for the first mile, some in sleighs, others in sailing boats fitted up with long blades of iron, like skates, by means of which they are urged rapidly along by their sails, not only before the wind, but even with a side wind, tacking and beating to windward as if they were in the water.

The *Britannia*, released from her bonds, reached Liverpool in fifteen days, so that no alarm had been occasioned by the delay ; and when the British Post-Office department offered to defray