

## OFF THE TRACKS.

THE tracks on the ice, which are considered safe for travelling with heavy loads, are marked out with young spruce or fir trees stuck in the ice at intervals of about 50 yards. This is done by the country people frequenting them at the commencement of the winter; air-holes, and other unsafe parts caused by different currents, are also marked by them with large clumps of young trees to warn the traveller. A track that has been used for a day or two without any fall of snow having taken place is easy enough to follow, even in the dark, as your horse will not leave it; but after a fall, heavy enough to cover up the road, the trees are found of great use.

Occasionally a short cut is tried, or you may lose the track owing to fog or other causes, when the best thing to be done is to get out and walk till you find it again, as a ducking on a cold winter's night is well worth avoiding when a little trouble will do so. Although you but rarely get right through the ice, you very often break the upper crust which forms after a thaw, and get into a foot or so of water, quite sufficient to cause alarm, as the horse plunges and splashes in his endeavours to regain a firm footing.

When a horse really breaks through the ice, the first thing to be done when you have saved your own skin and cut away the sleigh, is to run a slip knot round his neck with a piece of rope or the reins, and nearly choke him, as this has the effect of stopping his struggles, besides making him float well out of the water. You next get his feet on the ice, and if there are two of you, by the aid of the traces (or ropes, should you happen to have any with you,) he can generally be got out; but it is a most troublesome proceeding, and not always crowned with success. The Canadians do not think much of it, and are always provided with the necessary ropes, &c. After the ice breaks up in the spring, numbers of dead bodies are annually washed on to the beach. The sketch represents a ducking at night.