TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir—Every day during the season hundreds of Swiss travellers cross the Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, by way of the Wengern Alp, with the object of seeing the vast precipices of the Jungfrau range, and especially of witnessing the avalanches that rush and roar at frequent intervals down its sides. I beg to assure future tourists that the majority of these avalanches may be safely witnessed by those who are capable of a short scramble at the distance of a few yards, instead of from the Wengern Alp, which stands a mile from their course, and whence they appear of such immense proportions that spectators are as grievously to disappoint the spectators. This morning I witnessed the descent of an avalanche of such magnitude that it was excited in me a desire to see how near I could get safely to the channel through which all the avalanches from the north face of the Jungfrau necessarily fall, and I succeeded beyond my expectations. I have witnessed one of the most astounding of Alpine phenomena with perfect ease, and have examined it, with a leisure and a nearness which I believe no mountaineer, however practised, can have accomplished in his ordinary excursions. The channel I went directly faces the Jungfrau Hotel, on the Wengern Alp, and may be reached in an hour and a half. It is the sole outlet of the Jungfrau glacier (that goes here by the name of Jungfrau glacier), and conveys the snow and waters and its avalanches to the basin of the valley that separates the Jungfrau range from the Wengern Alp. Two or three of its passengers fall down it half-hourly; in this peculiarly hot and dry month they are much more rare, but in the course of a long day I witnessed three magnificent ones at ten yards' distance, besides many occasional smaller ones. The avalanches are detached from the snowfields above, then slide, tumble, and roll down a steep slope of perhaps 40 degrees, through a descent of 2,000 yards, to the head of the channel of which I have been speaking. Then they dash down in two great masses and numerous minor cascades, amounting in the whole to 1,000 feet of descent, and, hurrying together and rushing as they go, they rage and burst forth at the foot of the channel (by which I took my stand) like a storm of threshing flames. The avalanches have mainly consisted of a mixture of blocks of ice about one foot in diameter, and which seem never to exceed a yard; a few of the sides of the larger ones, and of smaller pieces of rounded ice is also projected, and fills the interstices between the larger balls, as the whole slides along the final slope of another 1,000 feet of descent to the bottom of the valley. After they have burst from the channel their course is steady but rapid; they follow the undulations of the slope like a riband. Occasionally one of the larger balls would break loose and roll, and so get the start of its companions; but the general appearance of the moving mass is that of an orderly mob filling a street and hastening, not hurrying, to the same object. The noise they make is peculiar; I do not know how to describe what I should have guessed it to be had I known it; it is unexpectedly. It has the "whirr," but not the splash of water from a broken waterpipe, and it rises and falls like the noise of the sea. The best comparison I can make is to the sound of a rapid tide rushing up many channels. Neither in the fearful rattle of the ice cascade, nor in the sound of the slide, could I trace any resemblance to the roar that is always heard at a distance. Precisely as after lighting, where a harsh, rending sound, composed of innumerable electric crepitations is echoed and reverberated at a distance into a prolonged thunder, so do the sounds made by the ice and acted on by similar influences produce the roar of the avalanche.

I strongly advise tourists to follow my example. They will mostly require a rope to enable them to scramble, and thus gain two short terraces of rather slippery rock, in which a stonemason could scoop a set of steps in half a day, and enterprising Swiss might also avoid himself the natural disposition of the strata, and cut a perfectly secure "covered way" within five yards of the ice fall.

FRANCIS GAULTON.

Scheideck, Aug. 8.

THE AVALANCES OF THE JUNGFRAU.