I think that no conclusive evidence of the correlation between dermatoglyphic and chromosome abnormalities in this syndrome can be drawn until further informations on similar cases are collected.—I am, etc.,

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1 Danzitbella, R., I Domestici dii della Mora, p. 177, Milan, Zambon, 1968.
2 Carosi, S., Archivio di Osteistoria e Ginecologia, 1967, 7, 553.

An XYI Individual of Average Height

SIR,—With reference to the article by Dr. J. Kahn and others (28 August, p. 521), no mention has been made of the possibility of further growth occurring in this boy. According to Tanner’s growth and development tables for boys 9-18 years, he is at present between the 25th and 50th percentile for height and between the 50th and 75th percentile for weight. Extrapolating, one can expect at his present rate of growth that he will grow at least another 3 cm in height and 5 kg in weight by 18 years, and that his growth will not necessarily be finished at that age.—I am, etc.,

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The Lungs and Ankylosing Spondylitis

SIR,—In your leading article (28 August, p. 492) it is stated that there are 16 published reports of ankylosing lobar fibrosis occurring in ankylosing spondylitis. The number already reported is, in fact, over 50 and the condition is evidently not very rare. I mentioned four cases in 1970 and now have another seven nearly ready for publication. There is good evidence that this is an extra-articular manifestation of ankylosing spondylitis.—I am, etc.,

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The Virgins Queen

SIR,—Dr. P. M. Bloom (28 August, p. 535) asks whether Queen Elizabeth I was examined to see if she could bear children, and he wondered if an impediment to sexual function had been discovered. I think that the evidence, so far as it goes, does not suggest that any impediment was found. Neale in his classic Queen Elizabeth1 wrote "When the French king was a suitor for Elizabeth’s hand in 1566, his ambassador asked her physician about the talk of sterility. He pooh-poohed the story. ‘If the King marries her,’ said he, ‘I guarantee ten children; and no one in the world knows her constitution better than I do.’ Burghley and had at least a tenth of the physician’s confidence. They wanted an heir to the throne, and did not doubt that marriage would provide one.” Again in 1578, when Alençon was a suitor, Neale quotes an ambassador “an unreliable retailer of gossip, although in this instance he may be right—says that she held a consultation of doctors to decide whether she could hope for children, and they saw no difficulty.” This was when she was 45.

Sir Arthur MacNalty2 retells the story of Ben Jonson, possibly in his cups, suggesting that Elizabeth had a membrana (7 imperforate) and was therefore incapable of bearing children. The Abbé de Brantôme, one of those in the train of Mary, Queen of Scots, also wrote that he believed that Elizabeth had a very narrow passage, but in this he was probably only repeating a rumour.3 There were two “official” medical opinions given about the Queen’s ability to bear children, when she was 32 and 45. Both expressed no doubt that she would be fertile if she married. Only ill-informed rumour seems to have doubted her sexual adequacy.—I am, etc.,

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SIR,—I would certainly make no claim to be an Elizabethan scholar, but the following facts are relevant to Dr. P. M. Bloom’s inquiry (28 August, p. 535).

I am but a barren stock. Both the authenticity and meaning of this remark have however been considered open to doubt. It was in this year that conflicting medical opinions were recorded, and it is evident that doctor and obstetricians disagreed with each other as much then as they do now. In Elizabethan times they were probably subjected to more religious and political pressures. Be that as it may, Dr. Huick, who heard the English physician to Katharine Parr, and had known Elizabeth since she was 15, advised her not to marry, according to Camden “for I know not what womanish infirmity.” Yet the French ambassador, on behalf of the French King and his mother Catherine de Medici, was pursuing similar inquiries to those previously undertaken by his Spanish counterpart. When he requested information about the current talk of the Queen’s sterility he was told in round terms by one of the Queen’s physicians: “Take no notice of what she says; if the king marries, I will answer for her having ten children, and no one knows her temperament better than I do.”4

Here was confidence indeed. But perhaps it was not misplaced. For 13 years later when a marriage was proposed between Elizabeth, aged 45, and the French Catholic prince M. Alençon, the Queen’s physicians were again asked about her aptness for childbearing. Their answer is given in Lord Burghley’s memorandum which states: “It cannot be denied but if her Majesty, when she was younger in years [had married] it had been better for her and the nation also; but considering the proportion of her body, having no impediment of smallness in stature, of