

ductive to a dispassionate viewpoint. Another "loaded" illustration is of an Indian mother gazing at an IUD held up before her, the caption reading "The IUD as a symbol of hope". A crowd scene imposed on a graph of the exploding world population turns out on closer inspection to be a group of happy people going to a cricket match. Irrelevant photos abound of the human eye, an IUD factory in Bombay, open-heart surgery, spraying against mosquitoes, a hand holding a bottle of a new hormone, women being vaccinated, groups of men who have been vasectomized, and so on. Why have three pictures of fertilized human eggs? The writer gives the impression of not fully understanding the cytology of fertilization, "the central event in human reproduction", for illustrations show the ovulated egg to contain a nucleus instead of meiotic chromosomes.

An insatiable demand exists for books on reproduction and this one may appeal to the general reader. Some of the illustrations are good, but far too many are irrelevant and distracting. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the photos were collected from all corners of the world and the text then filled in. The title was obviously selected as an eye-catcher. The space wasted could have been put to much better use in more critical assessment of the topics selected. And why is it always Asiatics or Africans who are held up as examples for the need for fertility control? It is our problem just as much as theirs.

R. G. EDWARDS

## FERTILITY CONTROL

### Contraception

*The Chemical Control of Fertility.* Edited by Daniel Lednicer. Pp. xiv + 269. (Dekker: New York, December 1969.) \$13.75; 131s.

THIS is an interesting and well written book that gathers together a good deal of information that is widely scattered through the literature. It is amusingly dedicated "To Libido, without which the work described in this volume would have been neither possible nor necessary".

The book has six chapters and nine contributors. Topics dealt with are the reproductive cycle in the female, the biology and chemistry of steroidal and non-steroidal contraceptives, and assays and screens in anti-fertility research. Very little clinical information on oral contraceptives is included, and the title is a little misleading in that there is no discussion on spermicidal chemicals and the like.

The contributors to the volume have been well selected and fulfil their assigned chapters very well indeed. Aside from the first chapter on reproductive cycles, which is written by R. B. Jaffe, G. Pérez-Palacios and G. B. Serra of the University of Michigan, all the other contributors are leading scientists with American pharmaceutical companies. They are F. B. Colton (Searle), R. A. Edgren (Wyeth), R. L. Elton (Sandoz), P. D. Klimstra (Searle) and L. J. Lerner (Squibb). This is as it should be, for it is these companies that have been the prime movers of a great deal of contraceptive research.

The contents of the various chapters are clearly arranged and the data are up to date and, because of skilful editing, there is little overlap between the various authors. It would, perhaps, have been helpful to have more details and results on the toxicology of the various compounds discussed. The book is well produced and the chemical diagrams and flow sheets are easy to follow and not overcrowded. I noticed one or two trivial printing errors.

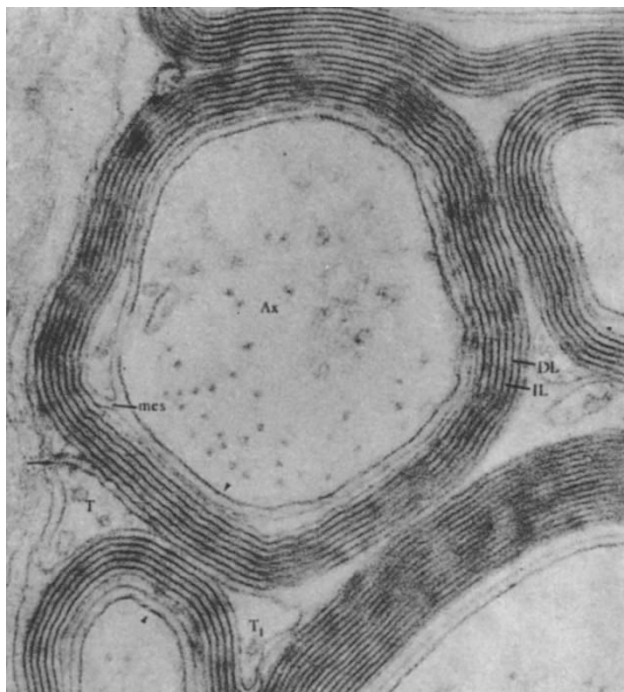
As far as the text is concerned, there is little that one can quarrel with. One surprising statement is included in a chapter by Edgren. In a discussion (p. 60) of the various progestogens used in oral contraceptives, norethisterone is classified as an "androgen with progestational effects", while norgestrel, which is a homologue of norethisterone, is called a "true progestogen with androgenic effects".

In fact, norgestrel is about three times as androgenic as norethisterone.

In general, this book should prove most useful to all workers in the field of reproductive physiology and endocrinology and should provide excellent background reading for clinicians involved in fertility control.

M. H. BRIGGS

## NERVES ENLARGED



Transverse section of one myelinated axon and portions of four others from the rat optic nerve, showing clearly the spiral structure of the myelin sheath. From *The Fine Structure of the Nervous System: The Cells and Their Processes*, by Alan Peters, Sanford L. Palay and Henry de F. Webster (Hoebner Medical Division—Harper and Row: New York and London, January 1970, \$18.75).

## DISSECTOR TURNED COLLECTOR

### John Hunter

By Jessie Dobson. Pp. xvii + 361 + 16 plates. (Livingstone: Edinburgh and London, 1969.) 50s.

JOHN HUNTER (1728–1793) began his scientific career as an anatomical dissector to his brother William (1718–1783), who had already established his teaching school in London. William had been educated at the University of Glasgow, but John received little, if any, formal education. Their paths were later to separate, John becoming a surgeon and his brother a fashionable obstetrician. Both, however, retained their devotion to teaching and research, in particular in anatomy and physiology. Their combined contributions to British medicine cannot be overvalued. John Hunter, however, far transcended the outlook of any previous surgeon in his view of nature as a whole and of man's place in the animal kingdom.

Miss Jessie Dobson, who is curator of the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, is in a unique position to give a review of Hunter's life and work, and on the whole she is successful in this. The facts of Hunter's life are well known and Miss Dobson tells these again in a clear and succinct manner.