THE INFINITELY SMALL IN BIOLOGY

By THOMAS M. RIVERS, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF THE HOSPITAL OF THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Infectious diseases and contagion were recognized many centuries before the causes of these phenomena were known or understood. Bacteria, which are considered to have been discovered by Leeuwenhoek in 1675, were known and had been studied for nearly two centuries before they were definitely associated with disease. The names of Dujardin, Davaine, Ferdinand Cohn, Koch and Pasteur stand out in the consciousness of every one as being associated with the proof that microorganisms are the cause of infectious maladies. Indeed, the labors of bacteriologists between the years 1840 and 1890 so clearly established the fact that microscopic animals and plants are the cause of infectious diseases that it became heresy to hold that such diseases might be produced in any other way.

1 Address presented Dr. Wendell M. Stanley to receive the 1941 Gold Medal of the American Institute of the City of New York, February 6.