

New York's Wonderful Fire Doctor

How Dr. Harry M. Archer risks his life in treating wounded fire-fighters

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By Raymonde G. Doyle

IF any one were to set down the biography of Dr. Harry M. Archer, of New York, one of the first facts he would record would be that the doctor is chief surgeon of the Fire Department there. He might go further and say that Dr. Archer is regarded as a hero in the department, and that he holds a medal inscribed, "For Valor." He has earned it, together with high public regard, for the reason that he has worked for more than a quarter of a century to build up the emergency medical service that he directs.

The automobile in which Dr. Archer races to big fires probably stands alone in its class. It isn't really an ambulance. It looks more like a pleasure car as it goes by. As a matter of fact, it is virtually a complete hospital on wheels, provided, among other things, with a power plant that can send it sixty miles an hour. He drives it himself, and the car is always ready for instant service at a firehouse near his home.

The automobile is divided into compartments that are dust- and moisture-proof. They are fully stocked at all times with splints, surgical needles, and the sutures needed in the treatment of bad cuts. Cotton gauze, antiseptics, forceps, lancets—they are all there.

There Is Even an Oxygen Machine

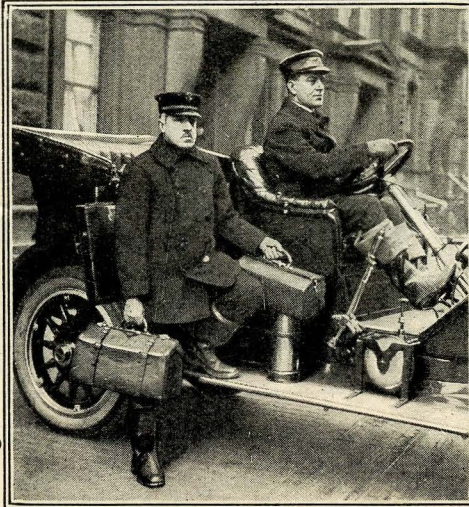
And fastened securely so that a jolt cannot loosen it, is an oxygen machine.

When oxygen was gaining prominence as a restorative agent in the treatment of partial suffocation, Dr. Archer found it successful. But he saw himself in a situation where the purest, freshest oxygen would be needed, and he realized that it might not be possible to get a tankful instantly.

Forthwith the doctor provided himself with an oxygen generator and the chemical necessary to the manufacture of the gas. He had a special compartment fitted into the automobile, and in it stored his generator and the chemical—sulphite of soda. Water poured on the sulphite of soda generates the oxygen.

The war produced a comparatively new treatment for burns—the paraffin treatment. The men of the New York Fire Department were among the first in this country to benefit by it.

The Archer automobile is equipped with the apparatus used



Dr. Harry M. Archer, whose work for the department is merely a side job. He carries the rank of battalion chief

in spraying the melted paraffin. There is a specially constructed atomizer in which the hot liquid is vaporized, a ladle in which it is heated to 180°, and a supply of "canned heat" to complete the apparatus. Occasionally the canned heat has given out, and then fire-boxes of the department engines served instead. Some day, Dr. Archer hopes, the engine of the automobile will be provided with an arrangement for melting the paraffin.

But the list of articles in this trick automobile is not yet exhausted. The



The paraffin treatment for burns, one of the things discovered by war surgeons, was early adopted by New York's fire doctor



One of the most necessary pieces of apparatus is an oxygen-tank. A compartment in the car carries it

sight of a badly injured fireman or an unconscious smoke or gas victim is all that is necessary to send the department's chief surgeon on the run to the car. In an instant he could produce army cots and blankets. And should the necessity for artificial respiration arise, out would come a pulmotor.

Behind Dr. Archer's thirty-five years of service to the men of the department and their families, there stands a list of some thirty thousand emergency cases that he has attended. In that time he has not missed a single big fire.

The Fire Doctor a Hero

But it is on the records that Dr. Archer has risked his life often and cheerfully to make fire-fighting easier for his men. And it is a matter of record, too, that one of these occasions arose when he calmly climbed down from his racing ambulance during the big fire in the Equitable Building, took a hypodermic syringe and a phial of drug from a compartment, and started for the entrance of the structure.

And he went inside, dodging burning embers and falling bits of stone—went to a point where an official of the Equitable Company had been trapped behind a heavy iron grating while trying to save valuable papers. Firemen were sawing the bars of the grating to release the man behind them. He was suffering, and he couldn't be taken to the automobile for treatment. Dr. Archer pushed his hand through the bars and administered morphine to him, and then went back to the automobile and prepared a cot for the time when he should be released and carried to safety.

The medal was presented for that deed.

Dr. Archer's work for the firemen is a side job, so to speak. As a regular thing he directs the work of the physicians and nurses of a life insurance company. In the Fire Department he is a volunteer with the rank of battalion chief and he pays his own expenses.