

(No Model.)

H. J. RICHNER & J. L. FONTAINE.
MAIL BOX.

No. 570,270.

Patented Oct. 27, 1896.

Fig. 2.

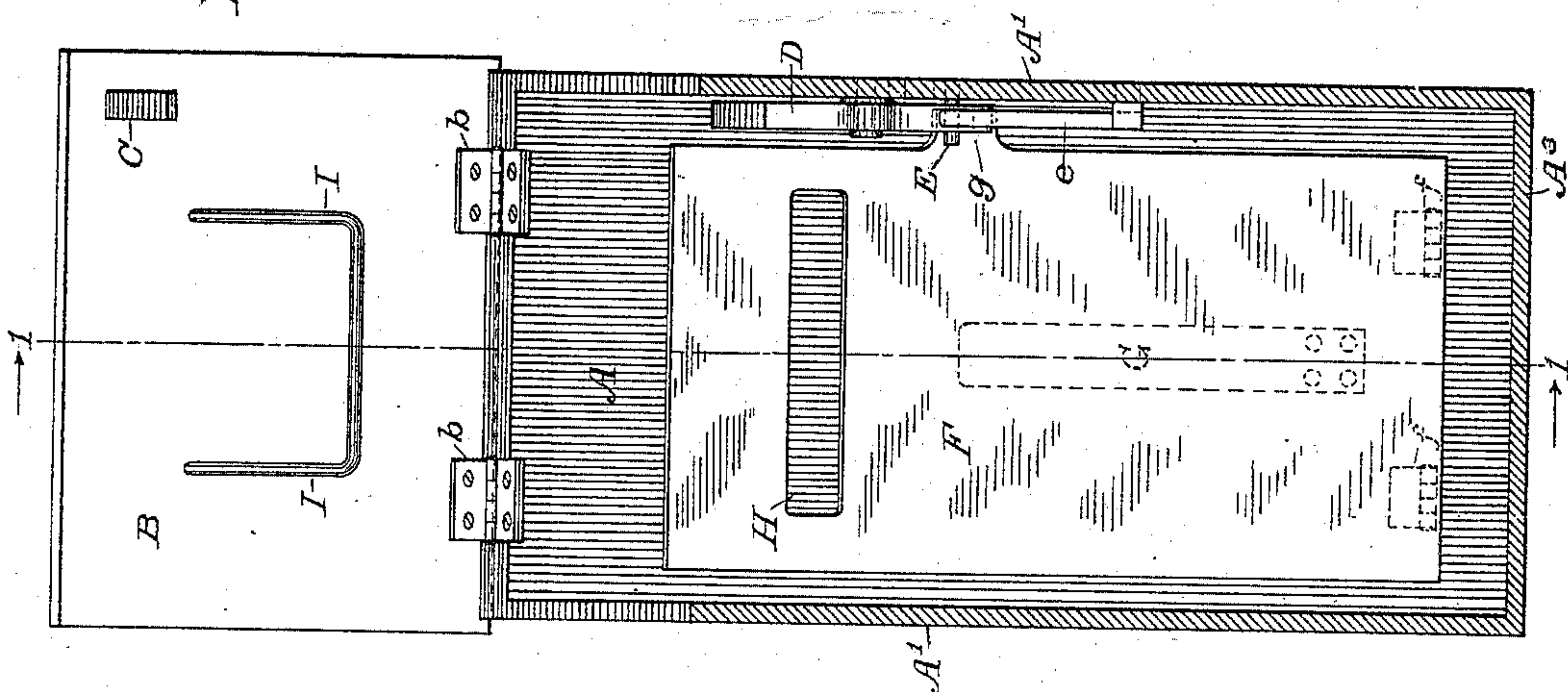
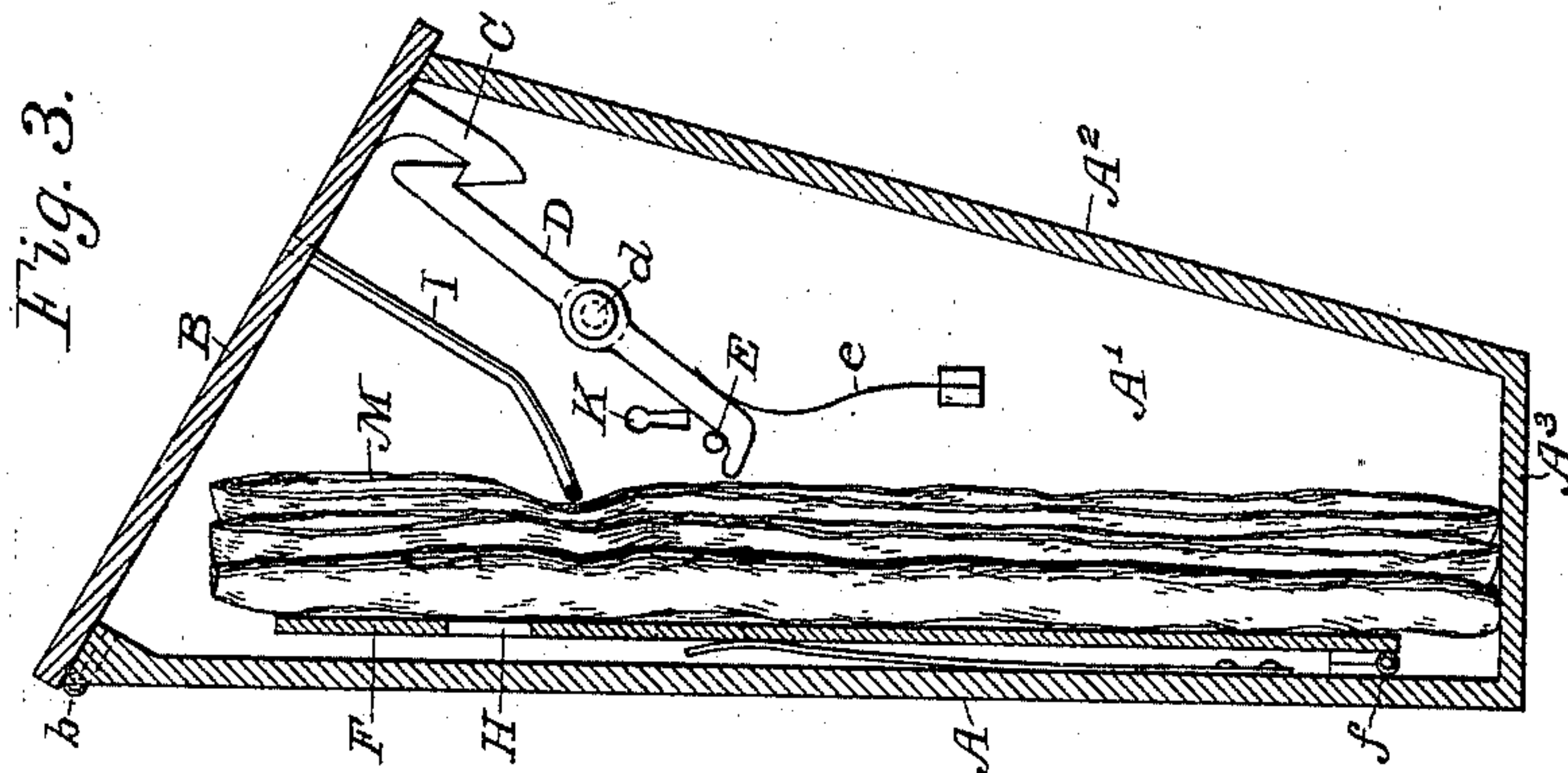
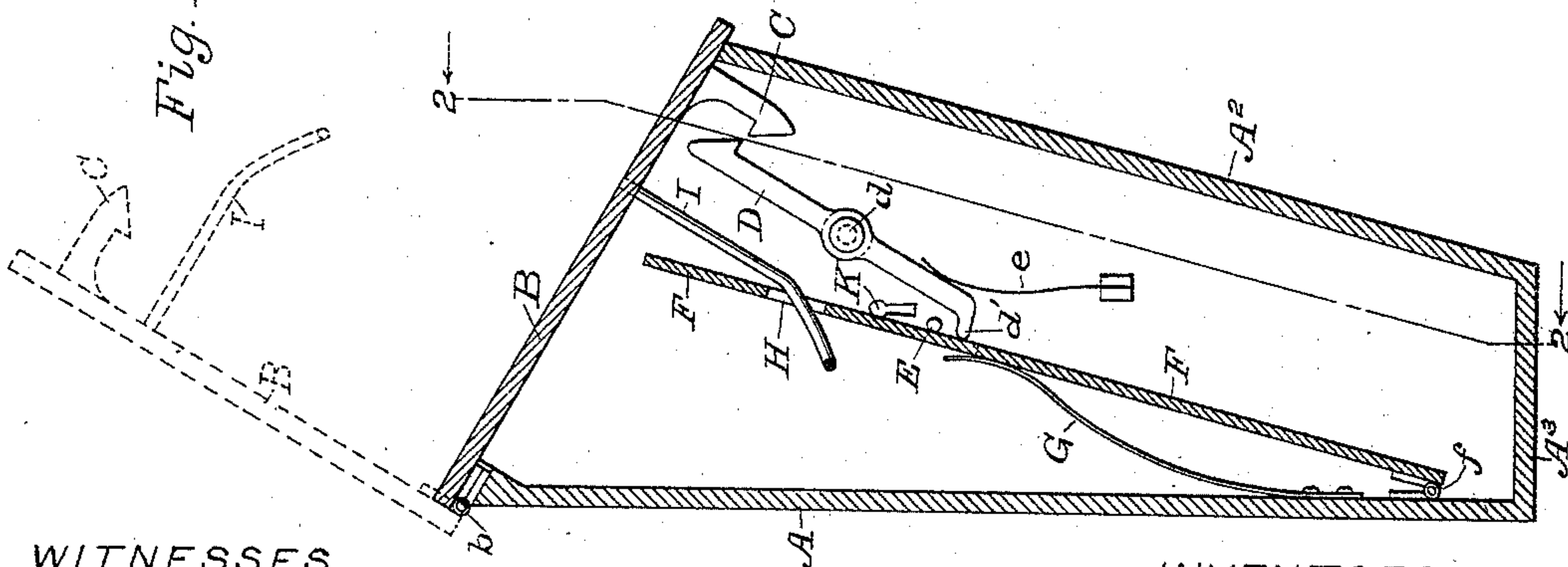


Fig. 1.



WITNESSES

L. G. Hopper
Ske Soacs

INVENTORS,
Herman J. Richner
John L. Fontaine.

BY

W. A. Skinkle
ATTORNEY.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

HERMAN J. RICHNER AND JOHN L. FONTAINE, OF CLEVELAND, OHIO.

MAIL-BOX.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 570,270, dated October 27, 1896.

Application filed June 8, 1896. Serial No. 594,638. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that we, HERMAN J. RICHNER and JOHN L. FONTAINE, citizens of the United States, residing at Cleveland, in the county of Cuyahoga and State of Ohio, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Mail-Boxes, of which the following is a specification, that will enable those skilled in the art to which our invention pertains to make and use the same.

Our invention relates particularly to house mail-boxes of the kind usually attached to the outside of residences, near their doors, for the reception of newspapers or mail-matter; its objects are to provide a mail-box the lid or door of which shall remain unlocked while the box is empty, but in which inserted newspapers or mail-matter will release a locking mechanism that will engage the lid and hold it closed and that can only be opened by a proper key inserted through an aperture in the side of the box; and it consists of such mechanism for accomplishing these objects as will hereinafter be described.

The accompanying drawings show our invention in one of the forms now considered most desirable by us, but changes obvious to a skilful mechanic might be made in the details or some of the parts used without others or in connection with others of an equivalent character without departing from the spirit of our invention as set forth in the claims at the end of this specification.

Figure 1 is a vertical section of our improved mail-box on the line 1 1 of Fig. 2, showing the interior mechanism of the box in the positions assumed when the box is empty and the lid or cover unlocked, the lid being shown in its open or raised position by dotted lines. Fig. 2 is a front elevation of the same, partly in section, on the line 2 2 of Fig. 1 with the lid shown in its elevated position. Fig. 3 is a vertical section similar to Fig. 1, except that the parts are shown in a position assumed when mail-matter is inserted in the box and the locking mechanism for securing the lid thrown into action and engaging the same by reason of the presence of mail-matter in the box.

Our invention may be applied to mail-boxes of varying shapes and construction and having either side or top openings for the recep-

tion of the mail-matter, and of course the details of construction would have to be changed somewhat from those shown in the drawings to adapt them to any such changes in the box.

The form of mail-box which we prefer is shown by the drawings, and consists of a vertical back A with parallel vertical sides A' A', an inclined front A², and a horizontal bottom A³. These are all rigidly connected together and may be made of wood, metal, or any desired material. The top of the box, which is open, is preferably inclined, as shown, and is provided with a lid B, hinged at b to the back of the box. Near its front edge end, close up to one side, the lid is provided with a depending hooked lug C, which when the lid is closed may be engaged by the correspondingly-hooked end of a latch D, pivoted at d against one side of the box. This latch is urged into position to engage the lug C by a spring e, and its movement in this direction is limited by a fixed stop E, as shown in Fig. 3. So long as the latch D is free it will remain in position to engage the lug C on the lid and when closed to lock it, as shown in Fig. 3. To prevent this, however, and to insure that the lid remains unlocked until mail-matter is inserted, we provide as follows:

Inside the box is a partition or thin plate F, hinged near its bottom, at f, to the back of the box and pressed forward away from the back by a spring G. A side lug or extension g of this plate lies in the path of and contacts against the lower end d' of the latch, pressing back its upper end and holding it out of position to engage the hook on the cover, the spring G being enough stronger than the spring e to permit of this result. Normally the swinging plate F stands well out in the box, its movement in this direction being arrested by the fixed stop E, which also limits the movements of the latch. Near its upper end there is formed in the plate F a slot or aperture H, extending nearly across the width of the plate.

Projecting from the cover B is a bent yoke or frame I, preferably made of wire and so shaped that when the lid is closed the lower end of this loop will pass through the slot H in the top of the swinging plate, that is, it will

pass through this aperture when the box is empty, as shown in Fig. 1, but when newspapers or mail-matter M are inserted in the box, as shown in Fig. 3, and the lid closed down, such newspapers or mail-matter will lie across the slot H and close it against the passage of the yoke I, which upon coming in contact with such newspaper or mail-matter forces it back and with it the plate F, the lug g, which is withdrawn from contact with the lower end of the latch D, freeing the latch, so that it may engage with the hook on the lid and securely lock it. In this position, as indicated in Fig. 3, the latch may be unswung to unlock the lid by means of a suitable key inserted through the hole K in the side of the box.

By means of our invention the lid or door of the box may always remain closed to protect the interior from rain, snow, or dirt, and yet be unlocked and ready for the insertion of matter by the postman or paper-carrier until such matter has been inserted, when upon closing the lid it is automatically locked and the matter in the box protected against depredation and the elements.

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new and useful, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

1. A mail-box, having an opening for the insertion of mail-matter, a lid or door to close said opening, a locking mechanism to engage and lock the door, a movable partition in the

box, independent of but normally bearing against the locking mechanism to hold said mechanism out of engagement with the lid, until mail-matter which is inserted in the box rests upon or against said partition and forces it out of contact with the locking mechanism which is thereby released and left free to engage the door when it is closed.

2. A mail-box, having an opening for the insertion of mail-matter, a lid or door to close said opening, locking mechanism to engage and secure the door when it is closed, a movable partition in the box spring-pressed against the locking mechanism to hold said locking mechanism out of engagement with the door, an aperture or slot in the movable partition, and a projection from the door the path of which lies through the slot in the partition, which slot is closed by the presence of mail-matter so that the closing of the door when mail-matter is in the box forces back the partition and releases the locking mechanism so that it may engage and lock the door.

In testimony whereof we affix our signatures, in the presence of two witnesses, at Cleveland, Ohio, April 25, 1896.

HERMAN J. RICHNER.
JOHN L. FONTAINE.

Witnesses:

WM. A. SKINKLE,
JOSEPH KENDRICK.