

(No Model.)

2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

T. G. CUNNINGHAM.
MAIL BAG FASTENER.

No. 574,138.

Patented Dec. 29, 1896.

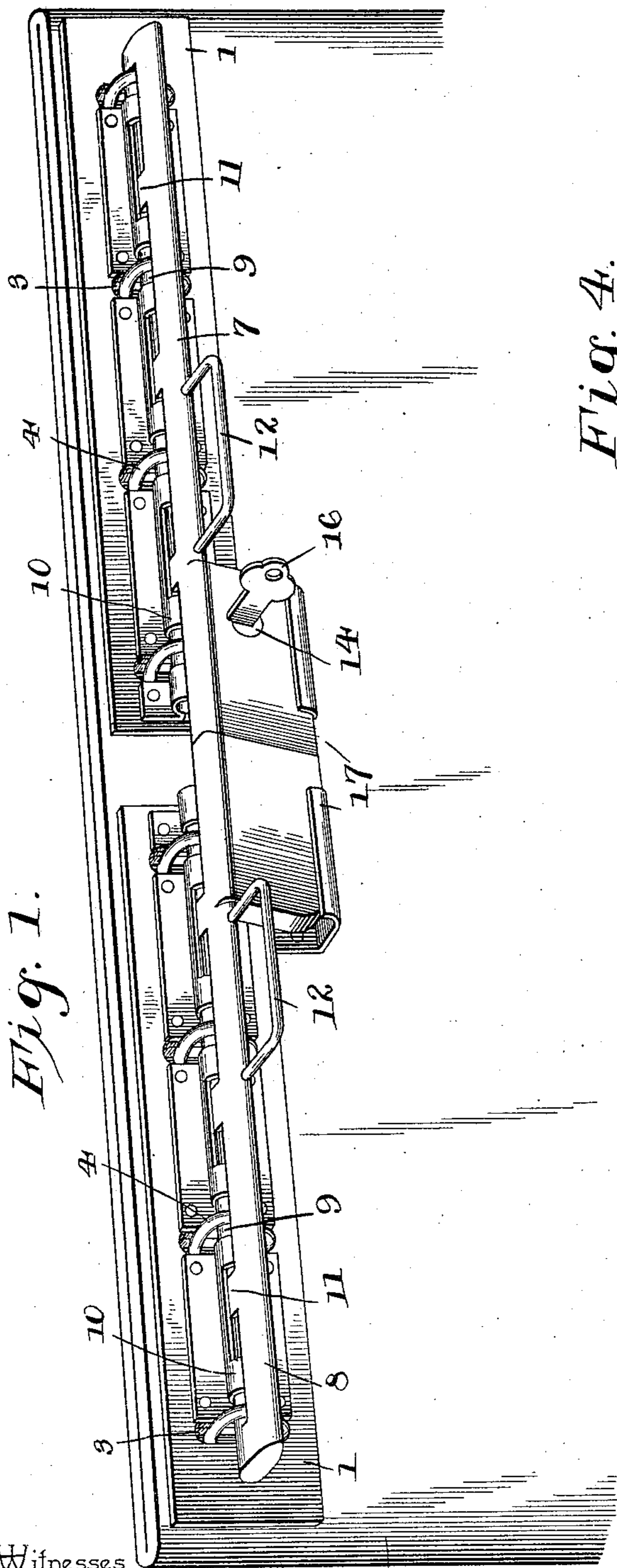


Fig. 4.

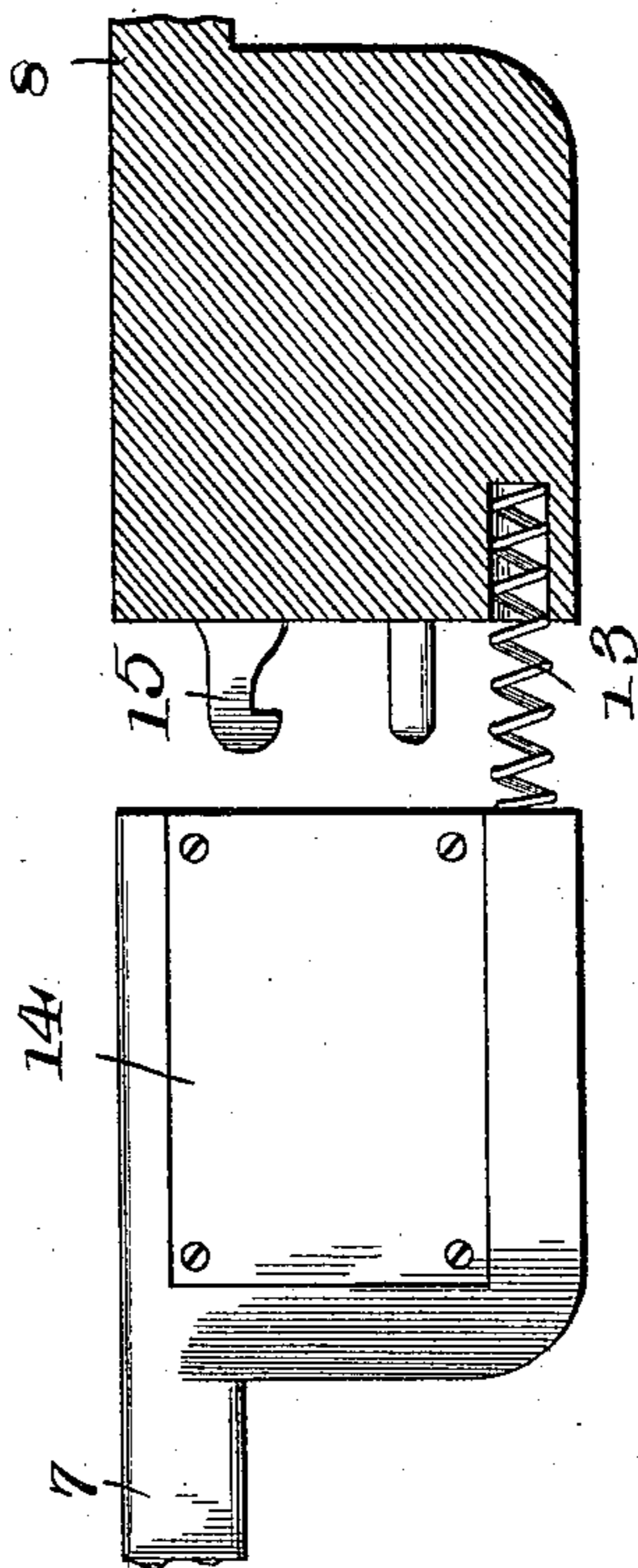
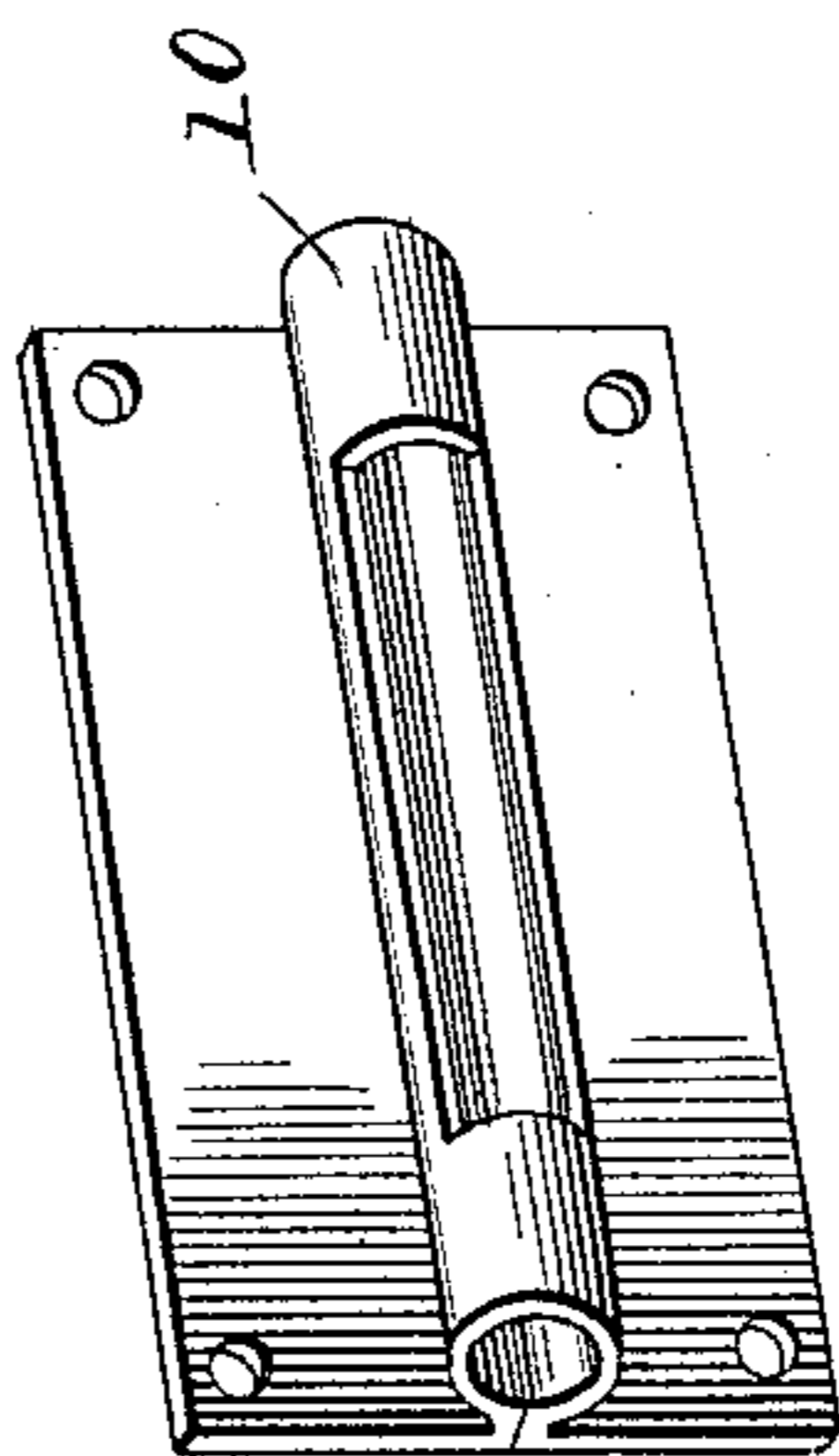


Fig. 6.



Witnesses

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J. H. Wiley

By *his* Attorneys,

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(No Model.)

2 Sheets—Sheet 2.

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Fig. 2.

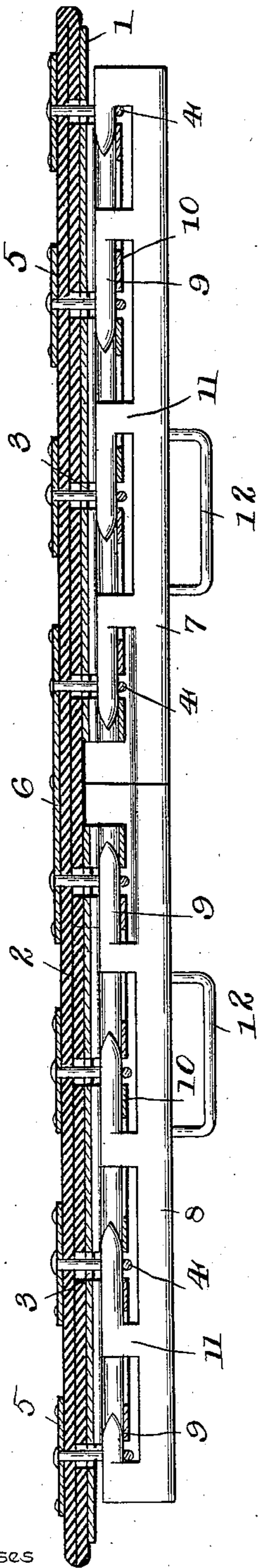


Fig. 3.

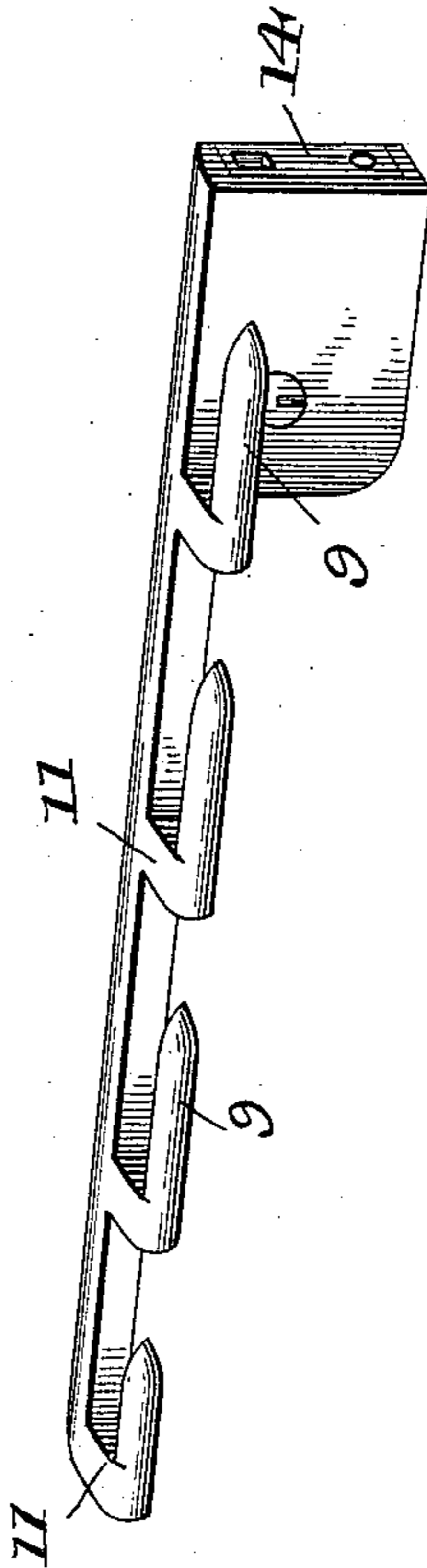
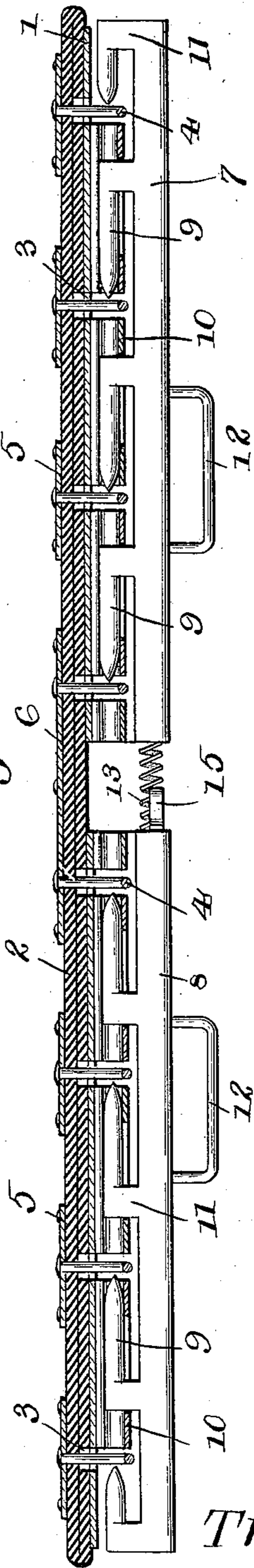


Fig. 5.

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

THOMAS GREGG CUNNINGHAM, OF FAYETTEVILLE, TENNESSEE.

MAIL-BAG FASTENER.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 574,138, dated December 29, 1896.

Application filed September 4, 1895. Serial No. 561,426. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, THOMAS GREGG CUNNINGHAM, a citizen of the United States, residing at Fayetteville, in the county of Lincoln and State of Tennessee, have invented a new and useful Mail-Bag Fastener, of which the following is a specification.

The invention relates to improvements in mail-bag fasteners.

10 The object of the present invention is to improve the construction of fastening devices for mail-bags and to facilitate the operations of locking and unlocking and to enable them to be rapidly performed.

15 The invention consists in the construction and novel combination and arrangement of parts hereinafter fully described, illustrated in the accompanying drawings, and pointed out in the claim hereto appended.

20 In the drawings, Figure 1 is a perspective view of a portion of a mail-bag provided with a fastener constructed in accordance with this invention. Fig. 2 is a sectional view taken longitudinally of the fastener and showing the parts locked. Fig. 3 is a similar view, the parts being unlocked. Fig. 4 is a sectional view of the inner ends of the locking-bars. Fig. 5 is a detail perspective view of one of the locking-bars. Fig. 6 is a similar view of one of the tubular guides.

30 1 designates a pair of similar front side plates arranged at the upper edge of a mail-bag 2 and provided with slots or openings 3, extending longitudinally of the mail-bag and adapted to receive loops or staples 4, mounted on the rear side of the mail-bag, preferably by means of plates 5 and 6. The plates 5 are arranged on the outer face of the rear side of the mail-bag and are rectangular and are located at opposite sides of the center; and the plate 6 is oblong and is located at the center of the rear side of the bag and spans the intervening space between the adjacent ends of the front plates 1 to support the mail-bag at the center of the top, when the parts are locked, to prevent the locking mechanism from being broken or strained at the center or the point of attachment of a pair of locking-bars 7 and 8.

50 The locking-bars 7 and 8 are disposed transversely of the mail-bag and are mounted on the exterior of the front plates 1, and are pro-

vided adjacent to the slots or openings with bolts 9, offset from the body of the locking-bars and arranged in alinement and capable of reciprocation to engage and disengage the staples or loops. The bolts of each locking-bar are simultaneously reciprocated by moving the locking-bar inward and outward, and the front plates have mounted on them or formed integral therewith tubular housings or casings 10, located in the spaces between the slots, and receiving and forming guides for the bolts. When a locking-bar is moved inward, its bolts are caused to span the slots or openings to engage the staples or loops, and each bolt projects from its casing or housing and is received in the outer end of the adjacent housing or casing. Each casing or housing is provided at its top with a longitudinal opening to receive the lug or shank 11, which connects the bolt with the body of the locking-bar.

Handles 12 are provided for enabling the locking-bars to be readily moved inward to cause their bolts to engage the staples, and the locking-bars are automatically separated or thrown outward to release the staples by a spiral or coiled spring 13, mounted on the locking-bar 8 and adapted to be compressed when the two locking-bars are together.

The locking-bar 7 is provided with a suitable key-operated lock 14, arranged at the inner end of the locking-bar and adapted to receive and engage an arm 15, located at the corresponding end of the other locking-bar 8. The lock is preferably a spring-lock in order to engage the arm 15 automatically as soon as the locking-bars are moved inward, and when the key 16 is turned to release the arm 15 the spring 13 operates to throw the locking-bars apart, thereby unlocking the mail-bag. The enlargement of the locking-bar 8 is provided at its abutting edge with a socket, and when the two enlargements abut the spring is concealed within the socket. This construction enables the mail-bag to be rapidly locked and unlocked with a minimum amount of labor on the part of the operator.

The locking-bars are supported by having their inner ends, which are enlarged to receive the engaging and separating mechanism, arranged in a pair of guides 17, preferably formed integral with the front plates 1 and de-

pending therefrom and embracing the lower edges of the enlarged inner ends of the locking-bars.

When the mail-bag is unlocked, the side plates, as will readily be understood, are adapted to hold the mail-bag open in convenient position for use.

It will be seen that the mail-bag fastener is exceedingly simple and inexpensive in construction, that it is positive and reliable in operation, and that it may be rapidly locked and unlocked.

Changes in the form, proportion, and the minor details of construction may be resorted to without departing from the principle or sacrificing any of the advantages of this invention, such as applying the fastener to bags, receptacles, pouches, and the like other than mail-bags; also, the reciprocating locking-bars may be arranged within a casing or a pair of casings to protect them from the weather and to prevent dust or other accumulation from interfering with the operation of the device; but these casings may be employed or omitted, as may be found necessary or desirable.

What I claim is—

In a mail-bag fastener, the combination of a bag provided with keepers, a pair of locking-bars arranged in alinement, provided with bolts to engage the keepers and having enlargements at their adjacent ends arranged to abut when the bars are locked, one of the enlargements being provided at its abutting end with a socket, a lock mounted on one of the enlargements and adapted to engage the other, a spring interposed between the abutting edges of the enlargements, adapted to throw the latter outward to withdraw the bolts and being concealed in the said socket when the bars are locked, and guides mounted on the bag and supporting the lower edges of the enlargements of the locking-bars, substantially as described.

In testimony that I claim the foregoing as my own I have hereto affixed my signature in the presence of two witnesses.

THOMAS GREGG CUNNINGHAM.

Witnesses:

W. B. DAUTHAT,

J. H. CUNNINGHAM.