

No. 815,997.

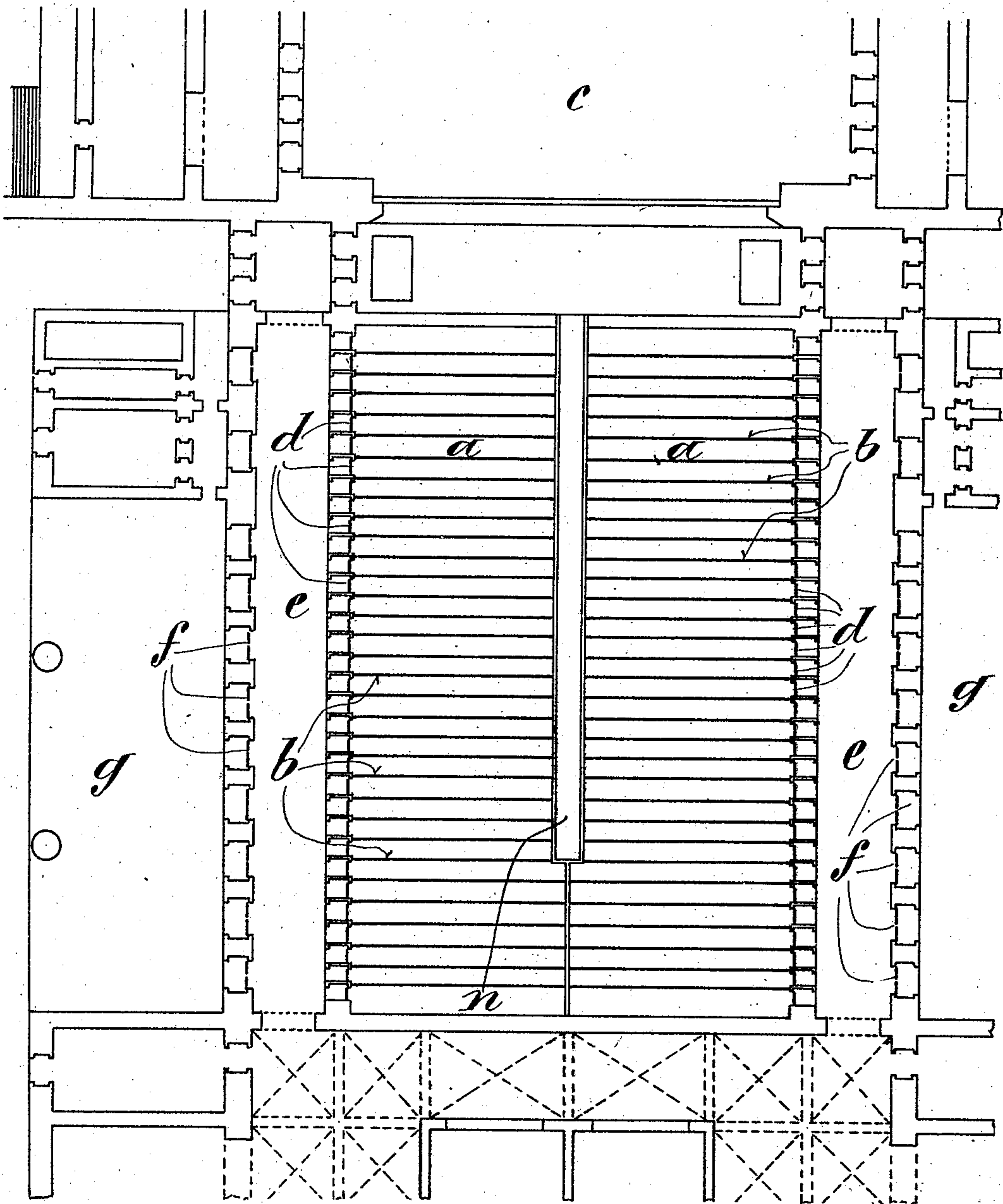
PATENTED MAR. 27, 1906. .

L. WITTENBERG.

MEANS FOR QUICKLY EMPTYING CROWDED THEATERS, &c.

APPLICATION FILED MAR. 3, 1904.

2 SHEETS—SHEET 1.



Witnesses:—
C. H. Leining
Gustav Heyde

Fig. 1.

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Ludwig Wittenberg
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2 SHEETS—SHEET 2.

Fig. 2.

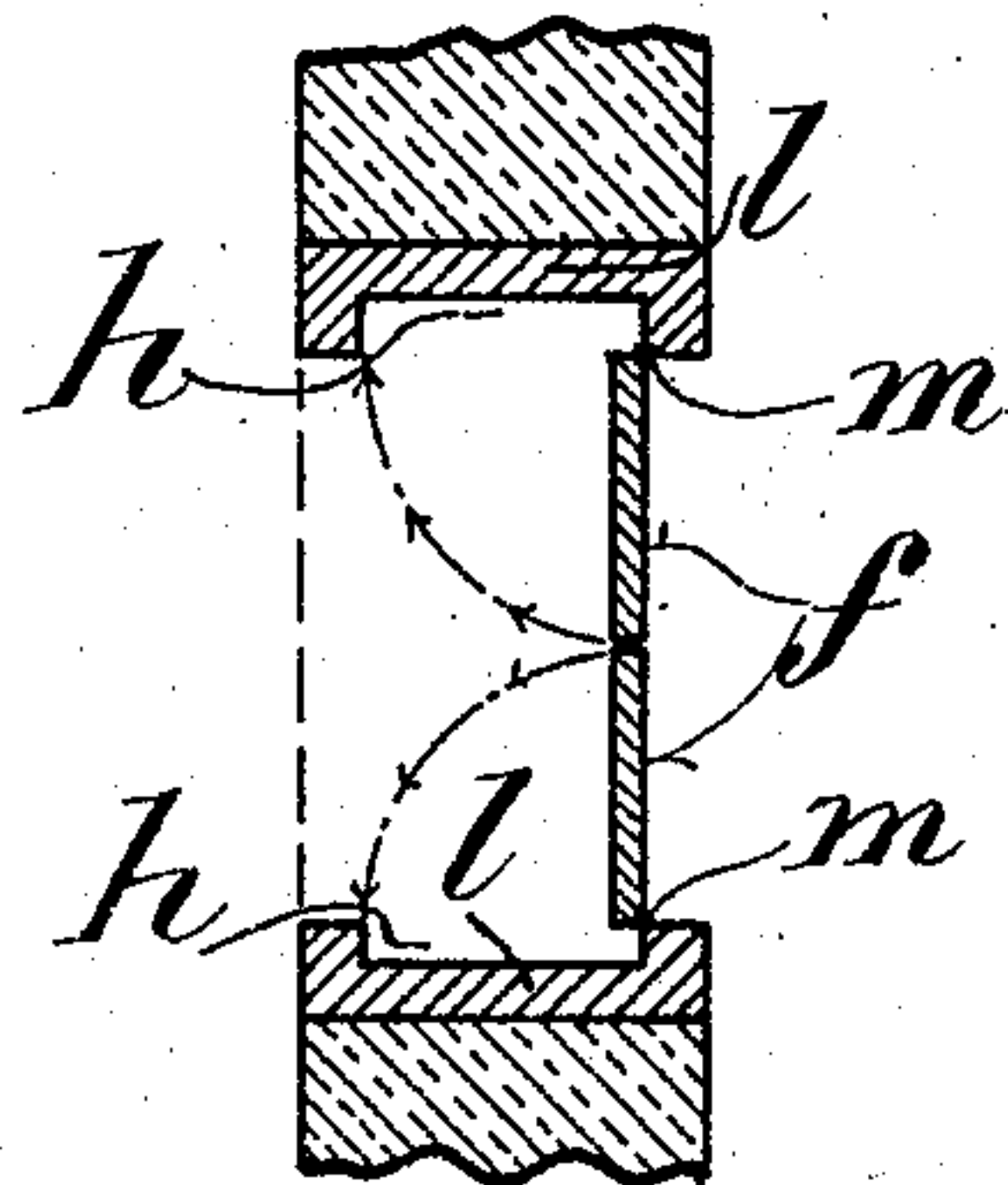
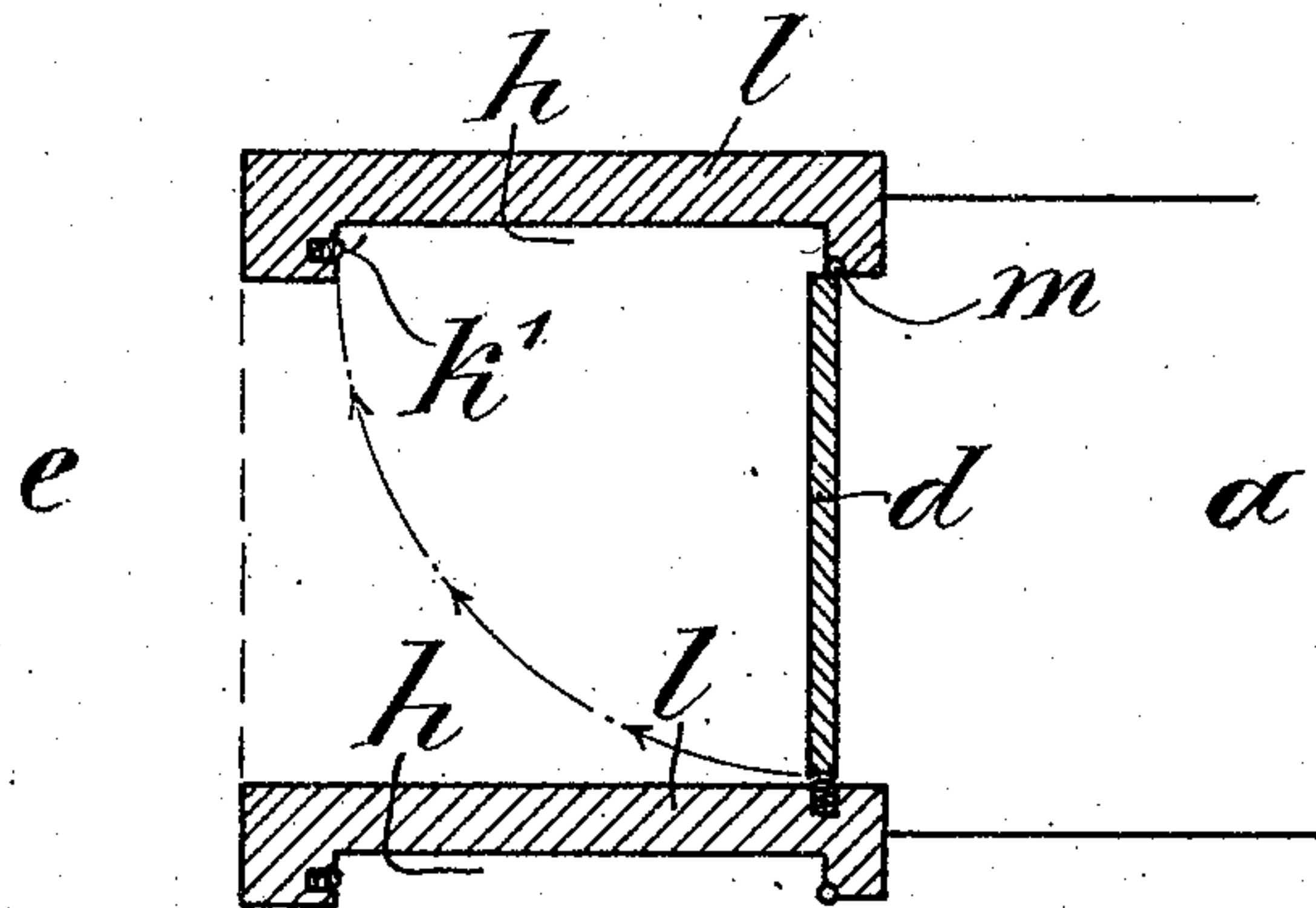


Fig. 4.

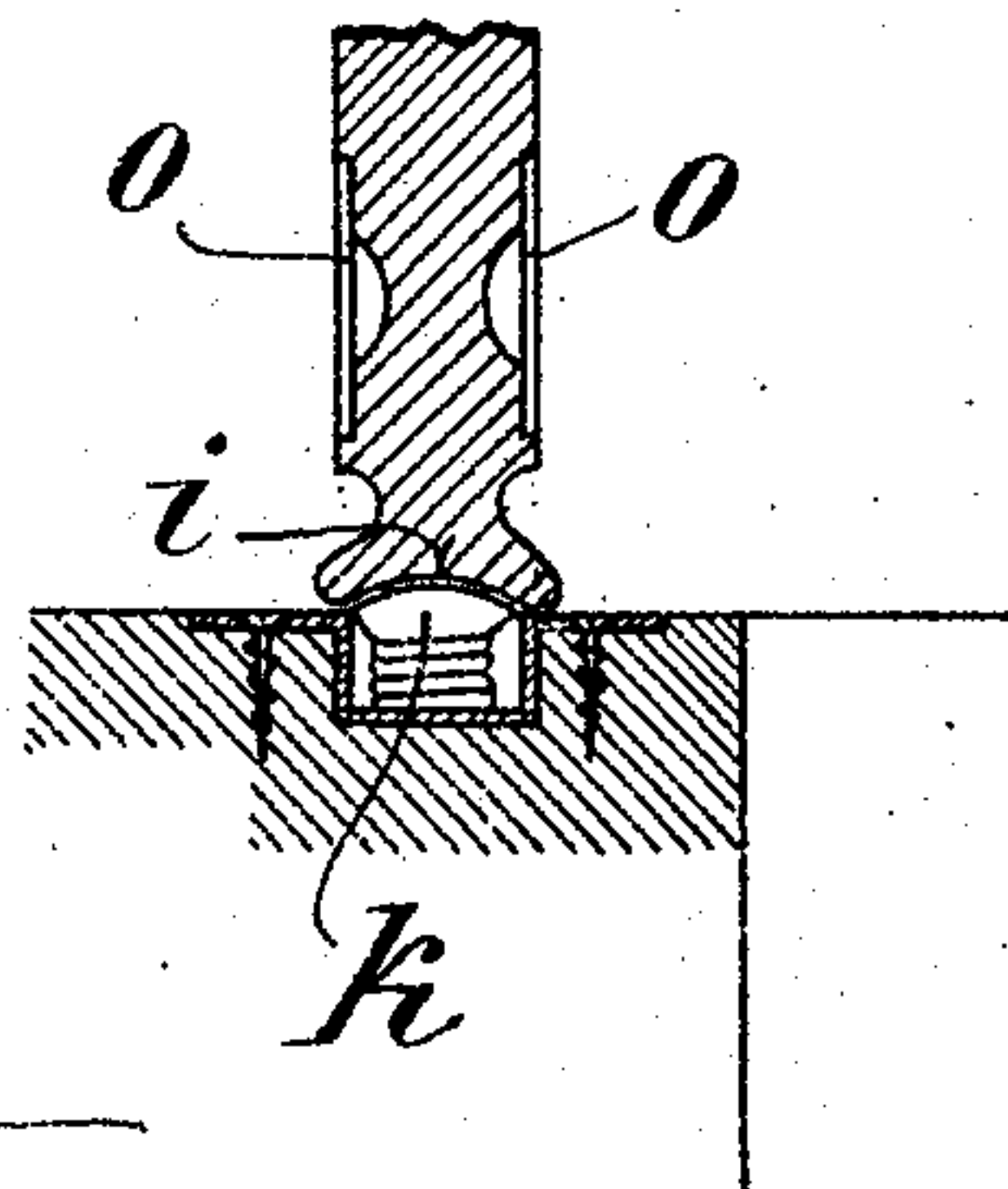


Fig. 3.

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

LUDWIG WITTENBERG, OF Breslau, GERMANY.

MEANS FOR QUICKLY EMPTYING CROWDED THEATERS, &c.

No. 815,997.

Specification of Letters Patent.

Patented March 27, 1906.

Application filed March 3, 1904. Serial No. 196,326.

To all whom it may concern.

Be it known that I, LUDWIG WITTENBERG, a subject of the German Emperor, and a resident of Breslau, Germany, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Means for Quickly Emptying Crowded Theaters and the Like; and I do hereby declare the following to be a full, clear, and exact description of the invention, such as will enable others skilled in the art to which it appertains to make and use the same.

Experience has shown that in fires breaking out in theaters or other crowded buildings the loss of life is due in most cases not to the fire direct, but to the ensuing crush caused by the panic-stricken audience in their effort to reach the exits, of which there is ordinarily an altogether inadequate number. The auxiliary exits are generally of no use owing to their being locked or being located in unlooked-for places and for the reason that often owing to short-circuit or other damage to the plant the lights in the place have gone out.

My invention has for its object to provide means which effectually prevent people being trampled to death or suffocated in the rush of a great mass of people for a few doors of inadequate size. I partition off the individual rows of seats in such manner that climbing over from one row to the other is practically impossible, and I provide each row of seats with a separate exit easily opened, leading to foyers, terraces, and thence to the street.

In order to make the invention more readily understood, I will now describe it with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 represents a plan view of a theater according to my design. Figs. 2 to 4 represent detail parts to be hereinafter referred to.

The rows of seats *a* are provided with rigid backs *b* of fireproof material and are of such height that they permit an unobstructed view of the stage *c*, but cannot easily be climbed over. From each row leads a door *d* into the anteroom or foyer *e*. Down the center of the auditorium a fireproof wall *n* is arranged corresponding in height to the seat-backs. In this manner each row of seats forms a separate compartment whose exit

can only be used by the holders of the respective seats. In case of danger the person nearest the exit naturally will make for it, and thus show the others in that particular row the shortest way out. From the foyer *e* swing-doors *f* lead to the surrounding terraces *g* and to the street. In a like manner the upper tiers and the stage are provided with doors. In order to prevent the opened door-wings from being slammed shut again or locked, the doors *d* and *f* are so constructed that upon being opened to their fullest extent they recede into a recess *h* of the door-case *l* flush therewith, and are locked in this position. The construction of the door mechanism is shown in Figs. 2 and 3 on an enlarged scale. The door *d* is hinged to the case *l* at *m* and is provided at its front edge with a recess *i*. An elastic button *k* is correspondingly secured to the case, adapted to engage said recess for the purpose of securing the door in its closed position. A similar button *k'* is provided at the outward jamb of the case for retaining the door in the open position. The doors may be provided with suitable handles *o*, for example, by recessing the door-panel and securing handles in the shape of rods across these recesses, as no part of the handle should protrude beyond the plane of the door.

In Fig. 4 is shown a construction of double swing-doors such as preferably lead from the foyer to the terrace.

An arrangement as described giving a separate exit for a limited number of people—say twenty-five to thirty—will effectually prevent a dangerous crush and jam, even in case of a panic, and even the largest theater should easily be emptied in less than a minute.

What I claim is—

Means for quickly emptying crowded theaters and the like, comprising fireproof partition-walls of a height to allow an unobstructed view of the stage but prevent climbing over, separating the individual rows of seats into non-communicating compartments, a swing-door for each such compartment leading to the foyer, swing-doors leading from the foyer to the street, means for securing the said swing-doors in the closed and opened position, comprising a door-case recessed to re-

ceive the door-wing, when open, spring-but-
tons sunk into the said door-case and adapt-
ed to engage a corresponding recess in the
front edge of the door-wing, and handles on
5 said doors flush with the surface thereof, sub-
stantially as set forth.

In testimony that I claim the foregoing as

my invention I have signed my name in pres-
ence of two subscribing witnesses.

LUDWIG WITTENBERG.

Witnesses:

SIEGFRIED MERKER,
LOUIS KATZ.