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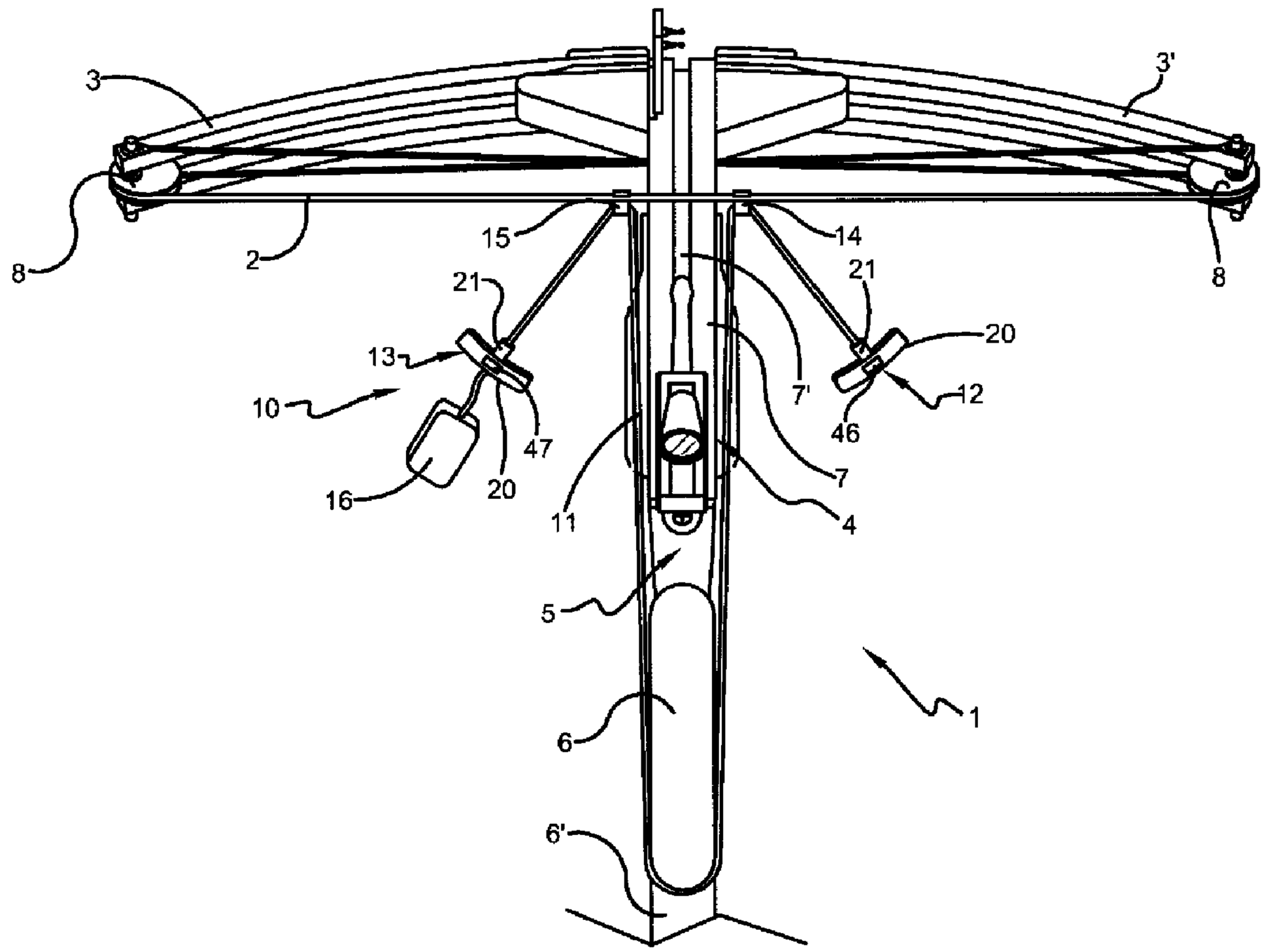


(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A portable device for drawing the bowstring of a crossbow. The cocking device may be designed to prevent the uneven drawing of the crossbow and may eliminate the complex installation process typically required to retro-fit an existing crossbow with known cocking devices.

ABSTRACT

A portable device for drawing the bowstring of a crossbow. The cocking device may be designed to prevent the uneven drawing of the crossbow and may eliminate the complex installation process typically required to retro-fit an existing crossbow with known cocking devices.

PORTABLE COCKING DEVICE

This application claims priority to provisional patent application Serial No. 61/258,303 titled Portable Cocking Device, filed on November 5, 2009, which is incorporated herein by reference.

I. Background

A. Field of Invention

[0001] This invention pertains to the art of methods and apparatuses of bowstring drawing devices and even more particularly, to the art of methods and apparatuses of portable cocking devices for drawing a bowstring of a crossbow.

B. Description of the Related Art

[0002] It is known to increase the speed and accuracy at which a projectile is propelled from an archery device is to increase the stiffness of the outwardly extending bow limbs. However, increasing the stiffness of the outwardly extending bow limbs results in an increase in the effort or force required when pulling or drawing the bowstring into position for firing. At some point, simply increasing the stiffness of the outwardly extending bow arms becomes counterproductive since users do not have the physical strength to pull back or draw the bowstring into position for firing and maintain this position until the user has sighted his or her target and is ready to release the bowstring. Furthermore, if the user is struggling to maintain the drawn position of the bowstring, his or her aim will be negatively affected.

[0003] In a crossbow, a longitudinally extending main beam, commonly called the stock, includes a trigger mechanism which holds the bowstring in the drawn position, allowing the user to sight a target without manually holding and maintaining the draw weight. This allows the stiffness of the bow limbs to be increased significantly, and modern crossbows can have bowstring pull weights of 150 pounds or more. Although the trigger maintains the drawn position of the bowstring, drawing the bowstring into engagement with the trigger mechanism is still very difficult. It is readily apparent that with high pull weights, even operating a crossbow could be difficult, if not impossible, for many users having limited physical strength. This is particularly true for target practice or other situations where the crossbow is cocked numerous times.

[0004] In order to draw the crossbow bowstring and cock the crossbow, the user must have sufficient physical strength to draw the full bowstring draw weight of the crossbow. Devices have been used in conjunction with crossbows to make this cocking operation easier for users to accomplish. For example, some crossbows include a stirrup, which is mounted to one end of the crossbow. In such crossbows, the user places the stirrup onto the ground and places a foot onto the stirrup to support the crossbow for cocking. By applying the user's body weight to the grounded stirrup, the user can draw the crossbow bowstring into cocked position. Although helpful, this provides only limited advantage. In addition, it is very difficult to properly draw the bowstring in a manner that the limbs are each tensioned to the same degree, or the bow is drawn in a balanced manner relative to the outwardly extending limbs of the crossbow such that when the bowstring is released from the crossbow trigger mechanism, an equalized force will be imparted to the projectile or arrow positioned therein. This balancing of the forces imparted on the bowstring by means of the crossbow limbs is particularly important for shooting accuracy in using the crossbow, and also adds to safety of use.

[0005] Although known crossbow bowstring cocking devices work well for their intended purpose, conventional manual crank winch devices and leverage-type cocking

devices are often large, heavy, and cumbersome and commonly must be connected and disconnected from the crossbow with each use. In many cases instead of simplifying the cocking procedure, these known devices add complexity or cost, are too cumbersome to handle and use effectively, and/or fail to ensure that the bowstring is drawn in a balanced manner. It remains desirable to develop cocking devices that are small, light, or not cumbersome, or which draw the bowstring in a balanced manner.

II. Summary of the Invention

[0006] According to one embodiment of the present subject matter, a device may comprise a first handle, a second handle, a housing, a first hook member, and a second hook member. The first handle may be connected to a first end of a flexible member. The second handle may be operatively connected to the flexible member. The first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by a user. The housing may comprise a retraction device operatively connected to a second end of the flexible member. The retraction device may be adapted to retract at least a portion of the flexible member into an interior portion defined by the housing. The first hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The first hook member may comprise a first attachment assembly and a first coupling assembly. The second hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The second hook member may comprise a second attachment assembly and a second coupling assembly. The first and second hook members may be positioned between the first and second handles. The first and second attachment assemblies may be adapted to receive at least a portion of a bowstring of a crossbow and the first and second coupling assemblies may be adapted to at least partially enable the movement of the first and second hook members along at least a portion of the flexible member.

[0007] According to one embodiment of the present subject matter, a kit may comprise a crossbow and a cocking device. The crossbow may comprise a main beam

including a stock having a butt portion and a barrel having an upper surface suitable for receiving an arrow to be fired from the crossbow; a pair of outwardly extending bow limbs operatively coupled to the distal end of the barrel; a bowstring operatively connected between the bow limbs; and, a trigger mechanism operatively coupled to the main beam, wherein the bowstring may be drawn rearward across the upper surface of the barrel and retained by the trigger mechanism such that the bowstring can be selectively released to propel the arrow from the crossbow. The cocking device may comprise a first handle, a second handle, a housing, a first hook member, and a second hook member. The first handle may be connected to a first end of a flexible member. The second handle may be operatively connected to the flexible member. The first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by a user. The housing may comprise a retraction device operatively connected to a second end of the flexible member. The retraction device may be adapted to retract at least a portion of the flexible member into the housing. The first hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The first hook member may comprise a first attachment assembly and a first coupling assembly. The second hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The second hook member may comprise a second attachment assembly and a second coupling assembly. The first and second hook members may be positioned between the first and second handles. The first and second attachment assemblies may be adapted to receive at least a portion of a bowstring of a crossbow and the first and second coupling assemblies may be adapted to at least partially enable the movement of the first and second hook members along at least a portion of the flexible member.

[0008] According to one embodiment of the present subject matter, a method may comprise the steps of: (a) providing a crossbow; (b) providing a cocking device; (c) attaching the first and second hook members to the bowstring; (d) adjusting the flexible member to cause a first length of the flexible member to extend between the first and second hook members; (e) positioning the first length around a portion of the main beam of the crossbow; (f) exerting a rearward force to draw the bowstring, wherein the

rearward force is exerted by utilizing the first and second handles; (g) slidably moving the first hook member or the second hook member relative to the flexible member, wherein the movement of the first hook member or the second hook member allows the bowstring to be drawn in a balanced manner; (h) retaining the bowstring in the trigger mechanism; (i) disengaging the cocking device from the crossbow; and, (j) retracting the flexible member, wherein the retraction of the flexible member at least partially causes the cocking device to comprise a stowed position. The crossbow may comprise: a main beam including a stock having a butt portion and a barrel having an upper surface suitable for receiving an arrow to be fired from the crossbow; a pair of outwardly extending bow limbs operatively coupled to the distal end of the barrel; a bowstring operatively connected between the bow limbs; and, a trigger mechanism operatively coupled to the main beam. The bowstring may be drawn rearward across the upper surface of the barrel and retained by the trigger mechanism such that the bowstring can be selectively released to propel the arrow from the crossbow. The cocking device may comprise: a first handle, a second handle, a housing, a first hook member, and a second hook member. The first handle may be connected to a first end of a flexible member. The second handle may be operatively connected to the flexible member. The first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by a user. The housing may comprise a retraction device operatively connected to a second end of the flexible member. The retraction device may be adapted to retract at least a portion of the flexible member into the housing. The first hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The first hook member may comprise a first attachment assembly and a first coupling assembly. The second hook member may be slidably coupled to the flexible member. The second hook member may comprise a second attachment assembly and a second coupling assembly. The first and second hook members may be positioned between the first and second handles. The first and second attachment assemblies may be adapted to receive at least a portion of a bowstring of a crossbow and the first and second coupling assemblies may be adapted to at least partially enable the movement of the first and second hook members along at least a portion of the flexible member.

[0009] One advantage of the present subject matter is that it provides a portable, compact, lightweight, cost-effective device that is easy to use. Further, the portable cocking device eliminates the difficult or complex installation process associated with many conventional cocking devices.

[0010] Another advantage of the present subject matter is that it enables the bowstring to be drawn in a balanced manner relative to the outwardly extending limbs of the crossbow such that when the bowstring is released from the crossbow trigger mechanism, an equalized force will be imparted to the projectile or arrow positioned therein.

[0011] Still other benefits and advantages of the present subject matter will become apparent to those skilled in the art to which it pertains upon a reading and understanding of the following detailed specification.

III. Brief Description of the Drawings

[0012] The subject matter described herein may take physical form in certain parts and arrangement of parts, a non-limiting embodiment of which will be described in detail in this specification and illustrated in the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof and wherein:

[0013] FIGURE 1 shows a perspective view of one embodiment of a cocking device engaged with a bowstring of a crossbow;

[0014] FIGURE 2 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a cocking device in a stowed position;

[0015] FIGURE 3 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a cocking device in a stowed position;

[0016] FIGURE 4 shows a perspective view of a hook member;

[0017] FIGURE 5 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a cocking device;

[0018] FIGURE 6 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a cocking device positioned around a portion of a crossbow to allow for the engagement and drawing of a bowstring;

[0019] FIGURE 7 shows a partial view of an embodiment of a crossbow having a cocking device engaged with the bowstring;

[0020] FIGURE 8 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of a retraction mechanism of a cocking device;

[0021] FIGURE 9 shows a flow chart depicting one method for utilizing a cocking device to draw a bowstring of a crossbow;

[0022] FIGURE 10 shows a partial exploded view of a second embodiment of a cocking device to draw a bowstring of a crossbow;

[0023] FIGURE 11 shows a partial exploded view of a second embodiment of a cocking device to draw a bowstring of a crossbow;

[0024] FIGURE 12 shows a partial view of an embodiment of a crossbow having a cocking device engaged with the bowstring.

IV. Detailed Description

[0025] Referring now to figures 1-12 wherein the showings are for purposes of illustrating certain embodiments of the present subject matter only and are not for purposes of limiting the same, FIGURE 1 shows a crossbow depicted generally at **1**. The crossbow **1** may comprise a main beam **5**. The main beam **5** may comprise of a stock **6** and a barrel **7**. The stock **6** may comprise a butt portion **6'** designed to be positioned against the shoulder of the associated user during firing of the crossbow **1**. The barrel **7** may comprise an upper surface **7'** suitable for receiving an arrow or bolt. A grip, not shown, may extend from the lower surface of the main beam **5** proximate to a trigger mechanism **4**. The trigger mechanism **4** may be operatively coupled to the main beam **5** and may be adapted to retain and selectively release a bowstring **2** to propel an arrow or bolt from the crossbow **1**. A pair of outwardly extending bow limbs **3, 3'** may be operatively coupled to the distal end of the barrel **7**. The bowstring **2** may be operatively connected to and extend between the ends of the bow limbs **3, 3'**. In certain embodiments, the crossbow **1** may comprise a compound bow wherein the bowstring **2** may be received by cams or pulleys **8** rotatably coupled to the ends of the bow limbs **3, 3'**. The crossbow **1** may be configured such that when the bowstring **2** is drawn back towards the butt portion **6'** the bow limbs **3, 3'** may flex or bend thereby storing potential energy in the crossbow **1**. The bowstring **2** may be drawn rearwardly across the upper surface **7'** until being received and selectively retained by the trigger mechanism **4**. Although a certain embodiment of the crossbow is shown to describe a cocking device **10**, the cocking device **10** may be utilized with any type of crossbow chosen with sound judgment by a person of ordinary skill in the art.

[0026] With reference now to FIGURES 1, 2, 3, 4, and 10 the cocking device **10** may comprise a portable device that can be conveniently carried by the user and subsequently utilized to draw the bowstring **2** of the crossbow **1** in a balanced manner. The cocking device **10** may comprise a portable, compact, lightweight, cost-effective device that may be easy to use and may eliminate the difficult or complex installation process associated with many conventional crossbow bowstring cocking devices. The cocking device **10** may comprise a device that enables the bowstring **2** to be drawn in a balanced manner relative to the pair of outwardly extending bow limbs **3, 3'** of the crossbow **1** such that when the bowstring **2** is released from the trigger mechanism **4**, an equalized force will be imparted to an arrow or bolt positioned on the upper surface **7'** of the barrel **7**. In a first embodiment, as shown, without limitation, in Figures 2 and 3, the cocking device **10** may comprise first and second hook members **14, 15**, a flexible member **11**, first and second handles **12, 13**, and a housing **16**. In a second embodiment, as shown in Figure 10, without limitation, the cocking device **10** may comprise first and second hook members **14, 15**, a flexible member **11**, first and second handles **12, 13'**. The first and second hook members **14, 15** may comprise a first end having a coupling assembly **17** and a second end having an attachment assembly **18**. The coupling assembly **17** may comprise a device adapted to slidably couple the first and second hook members **14, 15** to the flexible member **11**. In one embodiment, the coupling assembly **17** may comprise a pulley assembly **40**, shown in FIGURE 4, comprising a block **41** and a sheave **42** positioned adjacent to the first end of the first and second hook members **14, 15**. In another embodiment, the coupling assembly **17** may comprise a spindle, not shown, positioned at least partially within the first and second hook members **14, 15**. The spindle, not shown, may be rotatably coupled to the first and second hook members **14, 15** and may define an aperture extending through the first end of the first and second hook members **14, 15** suitable for receiving the flexible member **11**. In yet another embodiment, the coupling assembly may comprise a hollow ring, not shown, that defines an aperture formed through the first end of the first and second hook members **14, 15**.

[0027] With reference now to FIGURES 1 and 4, the attachment assembly **18** may be adapted to enable the selective attachment of the first and second hook members **14, 15** to the bowstring **2**. In one embodiment, the attachment assembly **18** may comprise a hook-shaped appendage **19** extending from the second end of the attachment assembly **18**. The hook-shaped appendage **19** may comprise a substantially U-shaped portion adapted to selectively engage the bowstring **2**. The hook-shaped appendage **19** may be designed to be positioned about a portion of the bowstring **2** such that the bowstring **2** may be retained by the hook-shaped appendage **19** as the bowstring **2** is drawn rearward towards the trigger mechanism **4**. Optionally, the hook-shaped appendage **19** may comprise a latch or similar device that is pivotally connected to the attachment assembly **18** and biased to normally enclose the opening of the hook-shaped appendage **19** to at least partially assist in retaining the bowstring **2** as the bowstring **2** is being drawn.

[0028] With reference to FIGURES 1-3, in a first embodiment, the first and second handles **12, 13** may be operatively connected to the flexible member **11** and may be adapted to be securely grasped by the associated user to draw the bowstring **2**. In a first embodiment, the first and second handles **12, 13** may each comprise a T-shaped device having an upper portion **20** adapted to be grasped by the user when drawing the bowstring **2** of the crossbow **1** and a stem portion **21** extending substantially perpendicular therefrom. In a second embodiment, as shown in Figure 10, the second handle **13'** may comprise a substantially T-shaped device integrally engaged with a housing **60**. The second embodiment may further comprise an upper portion **20** adapted to be grasped by the user when drawing the bowstring **2** of the crossbow **1** and a stem portion **21** extending substantially perpendicular therefrom. In certain embodiments, the handles may comprise or be replaced with elements adapted to engage with a user in an alternative manner. In certain embodiments, one or more of the handles **12, 13,** or **13'** may comprise or be replaced by a strap (not shown), a loop or appliance adapted for operational engagement with a user's wrist or elbow. In certain embodiments, one or more of the handles **12, 13,** or **13'** may comprise or be replaced by a device or appliance

(not shown) adapted for operational engagement with a prosthetic hand or other prosthesis of the type sometimes used by some specially-abled users.

[0029] In either of a first or second embodiment, the first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'** may comprise first and second magnets **46, 47**, respectively. The first and second magnets **46, 47** may comprise conventional magnets having a pair of oppositely charged poles and may be positioned within or coupled to the first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'**. The first and second magnets **46, 47** may be positioned within the first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'** such that when proximately located the first and second magnets **46, 47** may urge the first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'** into contact with each other. In one embodiment, the first and second magnets **46, 47** may be positioned within or coupled to the first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'** such that the poles of the first and second magnets **46, 47** extend along the longitudinal axis of the upper portion **20**. In another embodiment, the first and second magnets **46, 47** may be positioned within or coupled to first and second handles **12, 13** or **12, 13'** such that the poles of the first and second magnets **46, 47** extend along the longitudinal axis of the stem portion **21**.

[0030] With reference now to FIGURES 1, 4, 7, and 10 the flexible member **11** may comprise a relatively flexible, elongated member, such as, for example, a rope, string, strap, cable, or woven chord, comprising elasticity and shock load properties suitable for being utilized to draw the bowstring **2**.

[0031] In a first embodiment, the flexible member may comprise a first end **11a** fixedly attached to the first handle **12** and a second end **11b** operatively connected to the housing **16**. The second handle **13** and the first and second hook members **14, 15** may be slidably coupled to the flexible member **11** such that the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned between the first and second handles **12, 13**. In one embodiment, the flexible member **11** may extend through a channel **48** formed through the second

handle **13**. The channel **48** may comprise a diameter suitable to receive the flexible member **11** such that the second handle **13** can slide substantially freely along at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. The channel **48** may extend through the substantial center of the second handle **13** substantially along the longitudinal axis of the stem portion **21**. The flexible member **11** may be slidably coupled to the first and second hook members **14, 15** such that the flexible member **11** extends through the swallow **49** of the pulley assembly **40**. Stated differently, the flexible member **11** may be slidably coupled to the first and second hook members **14, 15** such that the flexible member **11** extends through the space formed between the block **41** and the sheave **42** of the pulley assembly **40**. In another embodiment, the flexible member **11** may extend through the aperture defined by the spindle, not shown, or through the hollow ring, not shown, positioned at least partially within the first end of the first and second hook members **14, 15**.

[0032] In a second embodiment, as shown in Figures 10, 11 and 12, the flexible member may comprise a first end **11a** fixedly attached to the first handle **12** and a second end **11b** operatively connected to the second handle **13'**. The first and second hook members **14, 15** may be slidably coupled to the flexible member **11**. In certain embodiments, when in a substantially fully stowed configuration, such as, without limitation, that shown in Figure 10, the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned adjacent to the first and second handles **12, 13'**. In certain embodiments, when in a deployed configuration, such as, without limitation, that shown in Figure 12, the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned between the first and second handles **12, 13'**. In certain embodiments, the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned along the flexible member **11** that connects the first and second handles **12, 13'**. In one embodiment, the flexible member **11** may extend into a channel **48'** communicating with the housing **60** of second handle **13'**. The channel **48'** may comprise a diameter suitable to receive the flexible member **11** such that the second handle **13** can accept at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. The channel **48'** may extend into the substantial center of the second handle **13** substantially along the

longitudinal axis of the stem portion **21**. The flexible member **11** may be slidably coupled to the first and second hook members **14, 15** such that the flexible member **11** extends through the swallow **49** of the pulley assembly **40**. Stated differently, the flexible member **11** may be slidably coupled to the first and second hook members **14, 15** such that the flexible member **11** extends through the space formed between the block **41** and the sheave **42** of the pulley assembly **40**. In another embodiment, the flexible member **11** may extend through the aperture defined by the spindle, not shown, or through the hollow ring, not shown, positioned at least partially within the first end of the first and second hook members **14, 15**.

[0033] With reference now to FIGURES 7 and 8, the housing **16** may be operatively coupled to the second end **11b** of the flexible member **11**. In one embodiment, the housing **16** may comprise a retraction device **50**. The retraction device **50** may be positioned substantially within the housing **16** and may be adapted to selectively or automatically retract the flexible member **11** such that at least a portion of the flexible member **11** is positioned within the housing **16**. In one embodiment, the retraction device **50** may comprise a shaft member **51** rotatably coupled to the housing **16**. The shaft member **51** may comprise a pair of end plates **52** connected to the ends of the shaft member **51** such that the end plates **52** rotate in conjunction with the rotation of the shaft member **51**. The end plates **52** may comprise a size and shape suitable for retaining the flexible member **11** as more fully described below. In one embodiment, the second end **11b** of the flexible member **11** may be operatively connected to the shaft member **51**. In a more specific embodiment, the second end **11b** of the flexible member **11** may be fixedly connected to the shaft member **51**. The retraction device **50** may further comprise a biasing member **53**, such as, for example, a spring, operatively coupled to the shaft member **51** to enable the selective or automatic retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. The biasing member **53** may urge the shaft member **51** to rotate in a first direction. The rotation of the shaft member **51** in the first direction may cause the flexible member **11** to be wound about the circumference of the shaft

member **51** between the end plates **52** thereby causing the retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11** into the housing **16**. In one embodiment, the retraction device **50** may comprise a ratchet gear **54** and a pawl **55**. The ratchet gear **54** may comprise a separate member carried by shaft member **51** or may comprise one of the end plates **52**. The ratchet gear **54** may cooperate with the pawl **55** to permit rotation of the shaft member **51** in one direction and to selectively prevent the rotation of the shaft member **51** in the opposite rotational direction. In one embodiment, the pawl **55** may be resiliently biased to a position between adjacent teeth formed about the circumference of the ratchet gear **54**. The pawl **55** may comprise a distal end that extends from the housing **16** or is otherwise accessible to be selectively actuated by the user to cause the pawl **55** to be disengaged from the ratchet gear **54** thereby permitting the rotation of the shaft member in both rotational directions. In certain embodiments, the biasing member **53** may comprise a clock spring, a torsion spring, another type of spring, or similar mechanism which will operate to enable the selective or automatic retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. In certain embodiments, the biasing member **53** may operate similarly to the springs in tape measures or other mechanisms adapted to permit selective or automatic rewinding of a component.

[0034] With reference now to FIGURE 10, in a second embodiment, the second handle **13'** may be operatively coupled to the second end **11b** of the flexible member **11**. In one embodiment, the second handle **13'** may comprise a retraction device **150**. In certain embodiments, the housing **60** operatively engaged with second handle **13'** may comprise a retraction device **150**. The retraction device **150** may be positioned substantially within the housing **60** and may be adapted to selectively or automatically retract the flexible member **11** such that at least a portion of the flexible member **11** is positioned within the housing **60**. In certain embodiments, the retraction device **150** may be adapted to selectively or automatically retract substantially all of flexible member **11** with the exception of the portions of flexible member **11** that are wrapped about sheaves **42** of hooks **14** and **15**. In certain embodiments, the retraction device **150** may comprise

a frame element or cassette **102** adapted for insertion or installation within housing **60** of the second handle **13'**. In certain embodiments, housing **60** may completely or substantially completely shroud or cover the retraction device **150**. The cassette **102** may comprise one or more perforations, slots, or holes **102a**, adapted to support or engage other components of the retraction device **150**. As shown in Figure 10, and without limitation, in certain embodiments, optional cassette **102** may be formed from folded sheet metal. In certain embodiments, optional cassette **102** may comprise holes or other adaptations to accept and rotatably engage a shaft member **151**. In certain embodiments, optional cassette **102** is omitted and other components such as housing **60** or handle **13'** may comprise holes or other adaptations to accept and rotatably engage a shaft member **151**. In certain embodiments, a shaft member **151** may be adapted to rotatably retain a hub **152** placed thereon. A hub **152** may comprise a size and shape suitable for retaining the flexible member **11** as more fully described below. In certain embodiments, hub **152** comprises a circumferential surface **152b** about which the flexible member **11** may be wound. In certain embodiments, hub **152** comprises an axis hole **152a** into which a suitable axle, such as shaft member **151**, may be inserted in order to rotatably retain hub **152**. In certain embodiments, the second end **11b** of the flexible member **11** may be operatively connected to hub **152**. The retraction device **150** may further comprise a biasing member **153**, such as, for example, a spring or spring loaded bushing, operatively coupled to hub **152** to enable the selective or automatic retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. The biasing member **153** may urge hub **152** to rotate in a first direction. The rotation of hub **152** in the first direction may cause the flexible member **11** to be wound about circumferential surface **152b** thereby causing the retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11** into the housing **60**. In certain embodiments, and without limitation, the retraction device **150** may further comprise one or more of a spacer **154**, and spacer **155**, a spring **156**, a clip **157**, and a pin **158**. In certain embodiments, the biasing member **153** may comprise a clock spring, a torsion spring, another type of spring, or similar mechanism which will operate to enable the selective or automatic retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member **11**. In certain

embodiments, the biasing member **153** may operate similarly to the springs in tape measures or other mechanisms adapted to permit selective or automatic rewinding of a component.

[0035] In certain embodiments, both handles **12** and **13'** may comprise either or both of a retraction device **50** or a retraction device **150**.

[0036] With reference to FIGURES 7, 8, and 12, in the certain embodiment, the housing **16** may comprise a latch mechanism **56** secured to the housing **16** or housing **60** or second handle **13'.** The latch mechanism **56** may comprise a device suitable for selectively attaching the cocking device **10** to the clothing or equipment of the associated user. In one embodiment, the latch mechanism **56** may be rotatably connected to the outer surface of the housing **16** or housing **60** or second handle **13'**. The latch mechanism **56** may be adapted to receive a portion of the clothing or equipment, such as, for example, a belt loop or pack strap, of the associated user to selectively retain the cocking device **10** suspended therefrom during periods of non-use thereby allowing the cocking device **10** to be conveniently carried and borne by the associated user. In a more specific embodiment, the latch mechanism **56** may comprise a hook, or similar device, having a latch **56a** biased to normally enclose the opening defined thereby to at least partially prevent the unintentional detachment of the cocking device **10** from the clothing or equipment of the associated user. In another embodiment, the latch mechanism **56** may be connected to a string, rope, cord, or similar item, that can be extended and retracted from within the housing **16** or housing **60** or second handle **13'** in a manner similar to the retraction of the flexible member **11** described above.

[0037] With reference now to FIGURES 1-12, to utilize a cocking device **10** to draw the bowstring **2**, the first and second hook members **14, 15** may be selectively attached to the bowstring **2** utilizing the coupling assembly **17**, step 110. In one embodiment, the crossbow **1** may be positioned substantially vertically with the beam **5**

upright. In certain embodiments, the crossbow **1** may be positioned substantially vertically with the beam **5** upright such that the bow limbs **3** rest against the ground and the barrel **7** extends substantially perpendicular therefrom or generally upward from the ground. The first and second hook members **14, 15** may be selectively attached to the bowstring **2** such that the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned adjacent to opposing sides of the main beam **5**. The positioning of the first and second hook members **14, 15** adjacent to opposing sides of the main beam **5** may cause the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'** to also be positioned adjacent to opposing sides of the main beam **5** wherein the first and second hook members **14, 15** are positioned between the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'**. The flexible member **11** may be adjusted such that a first length **11c** of the flexible member **11** is caused to extend between the first and second hook members **14, 15**, step 112. The first length **11c** may comprise a length suitable to allow the first length **11c** to be positioned or looped around a portion of the main beam **5**, step 114. In one embodiment, the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** may be positioned or looped around an upper portion of the stock **6** located behind the trigger assembly **4**. In another embodiment, the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** may be positioned or looped around a lower rearward portion of the stock **6**. The first portion **11c** can be positioned or looped around any portion or component of the crossbow **1** chosen with sound judgment by a person of ordinary skill in the art that allows the bowstring **2** to be drawn and selectively retained by the trigger mechanism **4**.

[0038] With continued reference to FIGURES 1-12, the associated user may then grasp the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'** and exert a generally rearward force by pulling substantially simultaneously on the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'**, step 116. In certain embodiments, the portable cocking device may provide some mechanical advantage affecting the generally rearward force needed to draw the bowstring **2**. In certain embodiments, as will be described more fully herebelow, the generally rearward force may be substantially less

than the draw weight of the crossbow. The slidably coupled first and second hook members **14, 15** may enable the even distribution of the pulling force being transferred to the bowstring **2** resulting in the even drawing of the bowstring **2**. In the first embodiment, the coupling of the second handle **13** and the first and second hook members **14, 15** permits the second handle **13** and the first and second hook members **14, 15** to slide substantially freely along the flexible member **11** thereby ensuring that the bowstring **2** is drawn in a balanced manner, step 118. In the first embodiment, uneven distribution of the pulling force may cause the sliding movement of the second handle **13**, the first hook member **14**, and/or the second hook member **15** relative to the flexible member **11** thereby causing the bowstring **2** to be drawn in a balanced manner. In the second embodiment, the coupling of the first and second hook members **14, 15** permits the first and second hook members **14, 15** to slide substantially freely along the flexible member **11** thereby ensuring that the bowstring **2** is drawn in a balanced manner, step 118. The generally rearward force may cause the movement of the bowstring **2** towards the butt portion **6'** of the stock **6** until the bowstring **2** is engaged and retained by the trigger mechanism **4**, step 120. Upon engagement of the bowstring **2** by the trigger mechanism **4**, the cocking device **10** can be disengaged from the crossbow **1** thereby allowing the subsequent firing of the crossbow **1**, step 122. In the first embodiment, the disengagement of the cocking device **10** from the crossbow **1** may cause the retraction device **50** to retract at least a portion of the flexible member **11** into the housing **16**, step 124. In the second embodiment, the disengagement of the cocking device **10** from the crossbow **1** may cause the retraction device **50** to retract at least a portion of the flexible member **11** into the second handles **13'**, step 124. In the first embodiment, the retraction device **50** may cause the retraction of the flexible member **11** such that the second handle **13** and the first and second hook members **14, 15** are moved towards the first end **11a** of the flexible member **11**. In the second embodiment, the retraction device **50** may cause the retraction of the flexible member **11** such that the first and second hook members **14, 15** are moved towards the first end **11a** of the flexible member **11**.

[0039] In another equally acceptable way of using the a cocking device **10** to draw the bowstring **2**, step 110 may be performed after step 114 and before step 116. That is, another equally acceptable way of using the a cocking device **10** to draw the bowstring **2**, comprises the steps of adjusting the flexible member **11** such that a first length **11c** of the flexible member **11** is caused to extend between the first and second hook members **14, 15**, step 112; positioning or looping the first length **11c** around a portion of the main beam **5**, step 114; attaching the first and second hook members **14, 15** to the bowstring **2** utilizing the coupling assembly **17**, step 110; and then proceeding with steps 116 through 124 as noted above.

[0040] The retraction of the flexible member **11** may cause the movement of the second handle **13** or **13'** towards the first end **11a** of the flexible member **11** and therefore towards the first handle **12**. The movement of the second handle **13** or **13'** towards the first end **11a** may cause opposite poles of the first and second magnets **46, 47** to urge the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'** together into a stowed position. In certain embodiments, the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'** may comprise mechanical fasteners (not shown) to hold the first and second handles **12, 13'** together into a stowed position. Mechanical fasteners (not shown) may comprise a clip, a clamp, a catch, a hoop and loop fastener, or other mechanical fasteners. In certain embodiments, a cocking device **10** may comprise mechanical fasteners (not shown) to hold the first and second handles **12, 13** or the first and second handles **12, 13'** together into a stowed position in addition to or in the alternative to the first and second magnets **46, 47**. The stowed position may comprise a position that allows for the convenient storage and transport of the cocking device **10**. The cooperation of the retraction device **50** and the first and second magnets **46, 47** may urge the cocking device **10** into the stowed position when the first and second hook members **14, 15** are not engaged with the bowstring 2. In the first embodiment, the stowed position may comprise a position wherein the further retraction of the flexible member **11** is prevented by the positioning of the second handle

13 relative to the housing **16** and the first end **11a** of the flexible member **11**. The second handle **13** may be positioned in contact with the first handle **12** and the first and second hook members **14, 15** may be positioned adjacent to the ends of the stem portions **21** of the first and second handles **12, 13**, as shown in FIGURES 2 and 3. In the second embodiment, the stowed position may comprise a position wherein the further retraction of the flexible member **11** is prevented by the positioning of the second handle **13'** relative to the first end **11a** of the flexible member **11**.

[0041] The above description of a method of utilizing a cocking device **10** to draw the bowstring **2** provides a method wherein the cocking device **10** is used in a manner that provides a substantial mechanical advantage to the associated user. That is, without limitation, and as shown in Figures 1, 6, 7, and 12, a user pulling on each of the two handles, **12** and **13** or **12** and **13'**, with some force X, will exert four times that force, 4X, less some minor losses due to friction, heat, hysteresis and the like, on the bowstring **2**. In other words, the practical mechanical advantage may approach the theoretical mechanical advantage of 2.

[0042] In some embodiments, the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** that is positioned or looped around an upper portion of the stock **6**, may interface with stock **6** in a manner that provides for substantial friction, adhesion, or other holding forces so that the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** will not substantially slip or move with respect to the stock **6** during use. In certain embodiments, the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** may comprise a material that promotes friction forces or adhesive forces between it and stock **6**. In some embodiments, the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** that is positioned or looped around an upper portion of the stock **6**, may interface with stock **6** in a manner that provides for substantial slippage or motion so that the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** may move, slip, or slide with respect to the stock **6** during use. In certain embodiments, the first portion **11c** of the flexible

member **11** may comprise a material that promotes movement or lubrication or diminishes friction between the first portion **11c** of the flexible member **11** and stock **6**.

[0043] In some embodiments, and without limitation, the above description of a method of utilizing a cocking device **10**, provides a pulley system or a mechanically similar system with more than two pulleys or mechanically similar elements (not shown). In some embodiments, and without limitation, the above description of a method of utilizing a cocking device **10**, provides a pulley system or mechanically similar system with two or more suspended pulleys or mechanically similar elements in each of the hook members **14, 15** (not shown). In some embodiments, and without limitation, the above description of a method of utilizing a cocking device **10**, provides a pulley system or a mechanically similar system with a plurality of pulleys or mechanically similar elements engagable to the stock **6** (not shown). In some embodiments, and without limitation, the above description of a method of utilizing a cocking device **10**, provides a compound pulley system with a plurality of pulleys engagable to the stock **6** (not shown).

[0044] In some embodiments, and without limitation, the first and second hook members **14, 15** may be integrally connected, coupled together, or otherwise joined into a single unit (not shown).

[0045] The embodiments have been described, hereinabove. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the above methods and apparatuses may incorporate changes and modifications without departing from the general scope of the present subject matter. It is intended to include all such modifications and alterations in so far as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalents thereof.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A device comprising:

a first handle connected to a first end of a flexible member;

a second handle operatively connected to the flexible member, wherein the first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by a user;

a housing comprising a retraction device operatively connected to a second end of the flexible member, wherein the retraction device is adapted to retract at least a portion of the flexible member into an interior portion defined by the housing;

a first hook member slidably coupled to the flexible member, wherein the first hook member comprises a first attachment assembly and a first coupling assembly; and,

a second hook member slidably coupled to the flexible member, wherein the second hook member comprises a second attachment assembly and a second coupling assembly, wherein the first and second hook members are positioned between the first and second handles, the first and second attachment assemblies are adapted to receive at least a portion of a bowstring of a crossbow and the first and second coupling assemblies are adapted to at least partially enable the movement of the first and second hook members along at least a portion of the flexible member.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein the second handle is slidably coupled to the flexible member.

3. The device of claim 1, wherein the second handle and the housing are integrally engaged.

4. The device of claim 1, wherein the first coupling assembly comprises a first pulley assembly comprising a first block and a first sheave and the second coupling assembly comprises a second pulley assembly comprising a second block and a second sheave.

5. The device of claim 1, wherein the first coupling assembly comprises a first spindle positioned at least partially within the first hook member and the second coupling assembly comprises a second spindle positioned at least partially within the second hook member.

6. The device of claim 1, wherein the first coupling assembly comprises a first hollow ring that defines an aperture formed through a first end of the first hook member and the second coupling assembly comprises a second hollow ring that defines an aperture formed through a first end of the second hook member.

7. The device of claim 1, wherein the first attachment assembly comprises a first hook-shaped appendage extending from a second end of the first hook member and the second attachment assembly comprises a second hook-shaped appendage extending from a second end of the second hook member.

8. The device of claim 7, wherein the first hook-shaped appendage comprises a first latch and the second hook-shaped appendage comprises a second latch and the first and second latches are each biased to normally enclose an opening of one of the hook-shaped appendages to at least partially assist in retaining the bowstring.

9. The device of claim 1, further comprising:

a first magnet positioned at least partially within or coupled to the first handle; and,

a second magnet positioned at least partially within or coupled to the second handle, wherein the first and second magnets are positioned to cause the first handle to be urged into contact with the second handle.

10. The device of claim 1, wherein the retraction device comprises:

a shaft member rotatably coupled to the housing;

a pair of end plates connected to the ends of the shaft member, wherein the end plates rotate in conjunction with the shaft member and retain at least a portion of the flexible member retracted into the housing; and,

a biasing member operatively connected to the shaft member to urge the shaft member to rotate in a first direction, wherein the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction causes the flexible member to wound around the circumference of the shaft member between the pair of end plates.

11. The device of claim 10, wherein the retraction device further comprises:

a ratchet gear; and,

a pawl, wherein the ratchet gear and the pawl cooperate to selectively prevent the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction.

12. The device of claim 1, further comprising:

a latch mechanism for selectively attaching the device to the clothing or equipment of an associated user.

13. A device comprising:

a first handle connected to a first end of a flexible member;

a second handle operatively connected to the flexible member, wherein the first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by a user;

a housing comprising a retraction device operatively connected to a second end of the flexible member,

wherein the retraction device is adapted to retract at least a portion of the flexible member into an interior portion defined by the housing,

wherein the second handle and the housing are integrally engaged, and

wherein the retraction device comprises,

a shaft member rotatably coupled to the housing,

a pair of end plates connected to the ends of the shaft member, wherein the end plates rotate in conjunction with the shaft member and retain at least a portion of the flexible member retracted into the housing, and,

a biasing member operatively connected to the shaft member to urge the shaft member to rotate in a first direction, wherein the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction causes the flexible member to wound around the circumference of the shaft member between the pair of end plates,

a ratchet gear,

a pawl,

wherein the ratchet gear and the pawl cooperate to selectively prevent the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction;

a first hook member slidably coupled to the flexible member, wherein the first hook member comprises

a first attachment assembly comprising,

a first hook-shaped appendage extending from a second end of the first hook member,

wherein the first hook-shaped appendage comprises a first latch biased to normally enclose an opening of the first hook-shaped appendage to at least partially assist in retaining the bowstring, and

a first coupling assembly comprising,

a first pulley assembly comprising a first block and

a first sheave,

a first spindle positioned at least partially within the first hook member,

a first hollow ring that defines an aperture formed through a first end of the first hook member;

a second hook member slidably coupled to the flexible member, wherein the second hook member comprises

a second attachment assembly comprising,

a second hook-shaped appendage extending from a second end of the second hook member,

wherein the second hook-shaped appendage comprises a second latch biased to normally enclose an opening of one of the second hook-shaped appendage to at least partially assist in retaining the bowstring, and

a second coupling assembly comprising,

a second pulley assembly comprising a second block, and

a second sheave,

a second spindle positioned at least partially within the second hook member,

a second hollow ring that defines an aperture formed through a first end of the second hook member;

wherein the first and second hook members are positioned along the flexible member intermediate to the first and second handles; the first and second attachment assemblies are adapted to receive at least a portion of a bowstring of a crossbow;

wherein the first and second coupling assemblies are adapted to at least partially enable the movement of the first and second hook members along at least a portion of the flexible member;

wherein the first coupling assembly comprises a first pulley assembly comprising a first block and a first sheave and the second coupling assembly comprises a second pulley assembly comprising a second block and a second sheave; and further comprising

a latch mechanism for selectively attaching the device to the clothing or equipment of an associated user, and

a device to urge the first handle into contact with the second handle or to hold the first handle into contact with the second handle, comprising either

a first and second magnet, wherein

the first magnet is positioned at least partially within or coupled to the first handle, and,

the second magnet is positioned at least partially within or coupled to the second handle, or

a mechanical fastener.

14. A method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a crossbow comprising: a main beam including a stock having a butt portion and a barrel having an upper surface suitable for receiving an arrow to be fired from the crossbow; a pair of outwardly extending bow limbs operatively coupled to the distal end of the barrel; a bowstring operatively connected between the bow limbs; and, a trigger mechanism operatively coupled to the main beam, wherein the bowstring may be drawn rearward across the upper surface of the barrel and retained by the trigger mechanism such that the bowstring can be selectively released to propel the arrow from the crossbow;

(b) providing a cocking device comprising: a first handle and a second handle, wherein the first and second handles are adapted to be grasped by an associated user; a first hook member, wherein the first hook member comprises a first coupling assembly and a first attachment assembly; a second hook member, wherein the second hook member comprises a second coupling assembly and a second attachment assembly; a flexible member having a first end and a second end, wherein the first end of the flexible member is connected to the first handle, the first coupling assembly slidably couples the first hook member to the flexible member, the second coupling assembly slidably couples the second hook member to the flexible member, and the flexible member is operatively connected to the second handle; and, a housing comprising a retraction device, wherein the second end of the flexible member is operatively coupled to the retraction device and

the retraction device enables the retraction of at least a portion of the flexible member into the housing;

(c) attaching the first and second hook members to the bowstring;

(d) adjusting the flexible member to cause a first length of the flexible member to extend between the first and second hook members;

(e) positioning the first length around a portion of the main beam of the crossbow;

(f) exerting a rearward force to draw the bowstring, wherein the rearward force is exerted by utilizing the first and second handles;

(g) slidably moving the first hook member or the second hook member relative to the flexible member, wherein the movement of the first hook member or the second hook member allows the bowstring to be drawn in a balanced manner;

(h) retaining the bowstring in the trigger mechanism;

(i) disengaging the cocking device from the crossbow; and,

(j) retracting the flexible member, wherein the retraction of the flexible member at least partially causes the cocking device to comprise a stowed position.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the second handle is slidably coupled to the flexible member.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the second handle and the housing are integrally engaged.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the cocking device further comprises a latch mechanism for selectively attaching the cocking device to the clothing or equipment of an associated user and the method further comprises the step of:

attaching the cocking device to the clothing or equipment of the associated user.

18. The method of claim 14, wherein step (j) further comprises the step of:

urging a shaft member to rotate in a first direction, wherein the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction at least partially causes the retraction of the flexible member and the shaft member is rotatably coupled to the housing and a biasing member is operatively connected to the shaft member to urge the shaft member to rotate in the first direction and the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction causes the flexible member to wound around the circumference of the shaft member.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:

actuating a pawl, wherein the pawl is normally engaged with a ratchet gear operatively connected to the shaft member to selectively prevent the rotation of the shaft member in the first direction and the actuation of the pawl causes the pawl to be disengaged from the ratchet gear to at least partially cause the retraction of the flexible member.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein step (j) further comprises the step of:

urging the first handle into contact with the second handle, wherein a first magnet positioned at least partially within or coupled to the first handle and a second magnet positioned at least partially within or coupled to the second handle at least partially causes the first and second handles to be urged into contact.

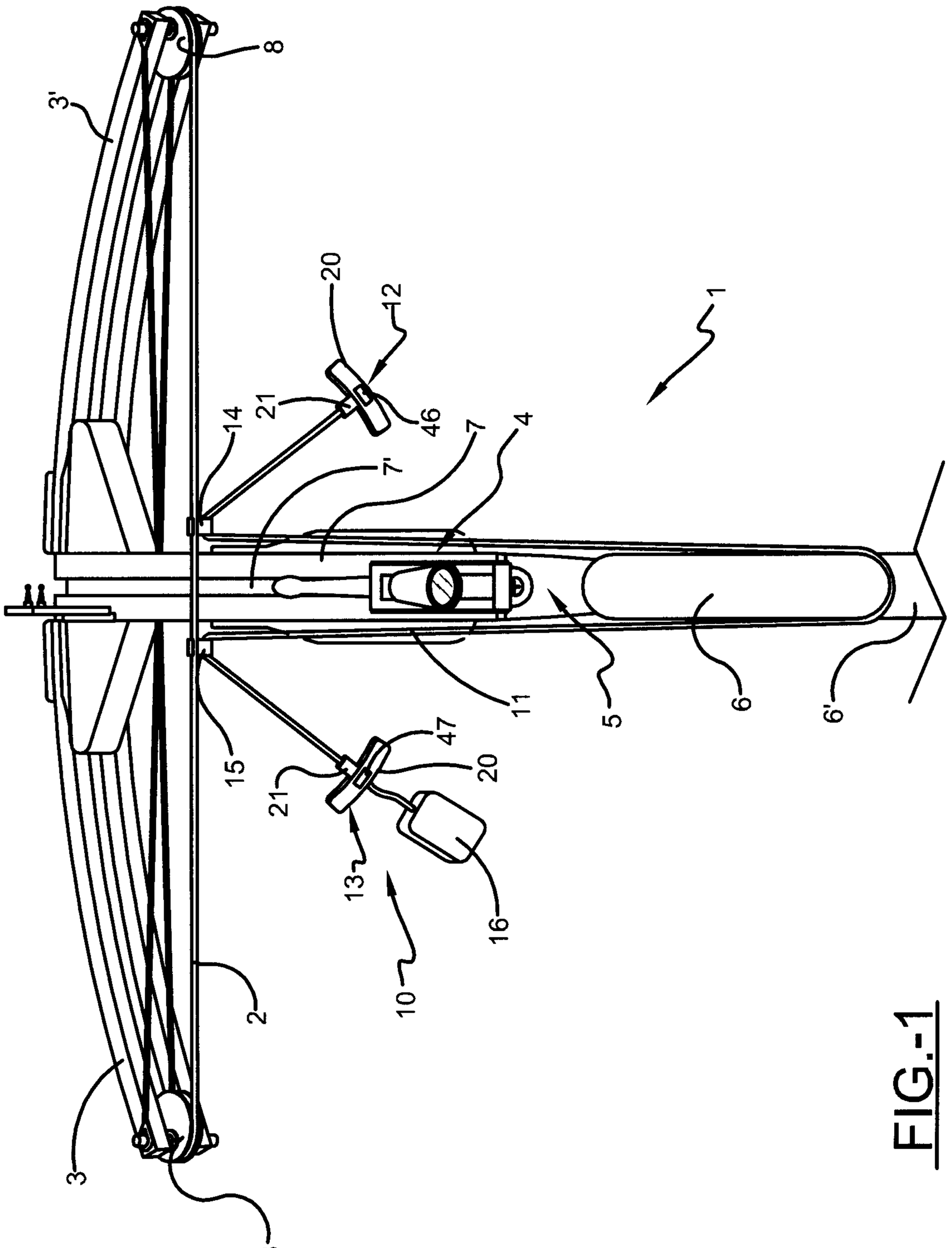


FIG.-1

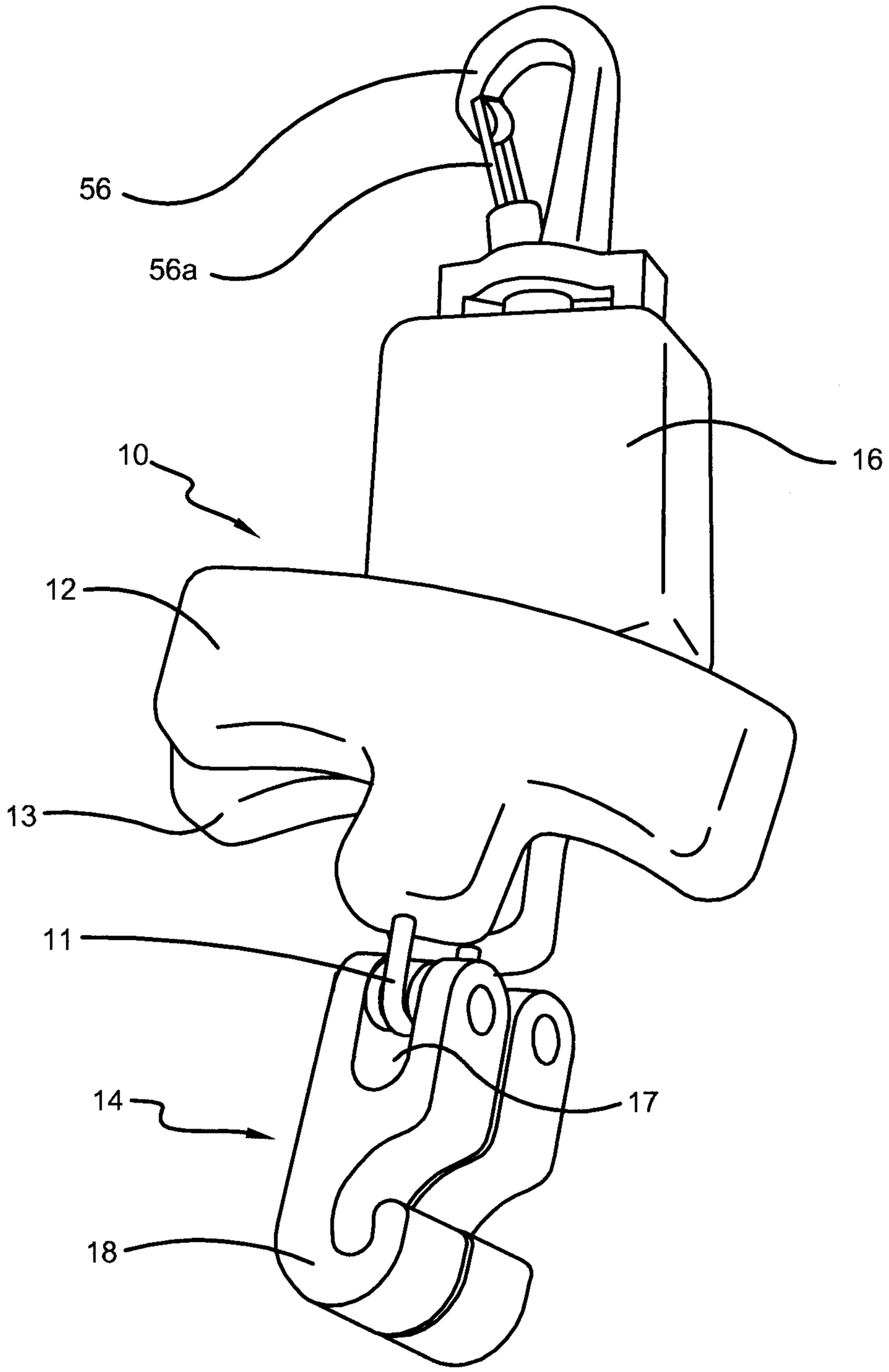


FIG.-2

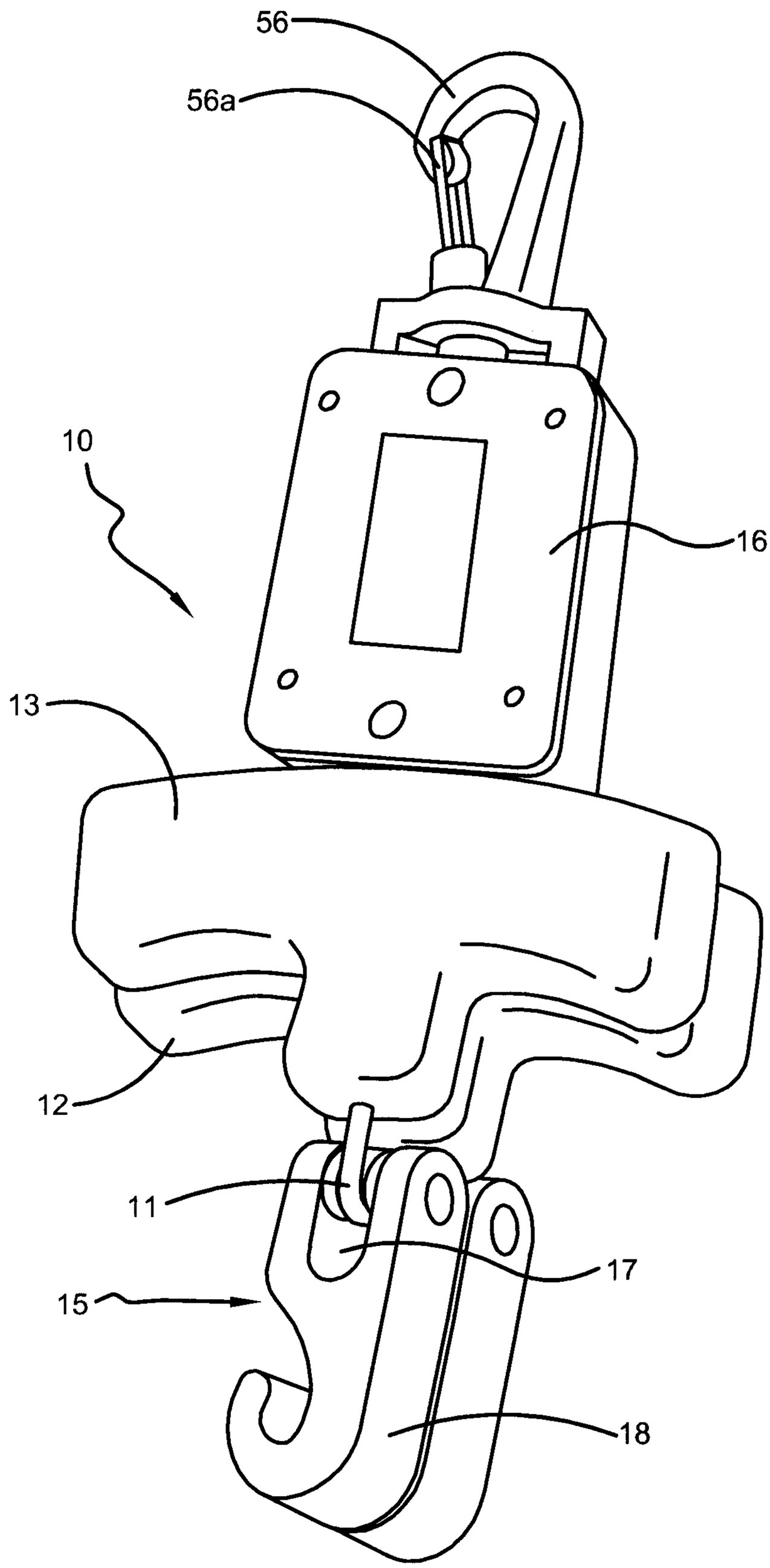


FIG.-3

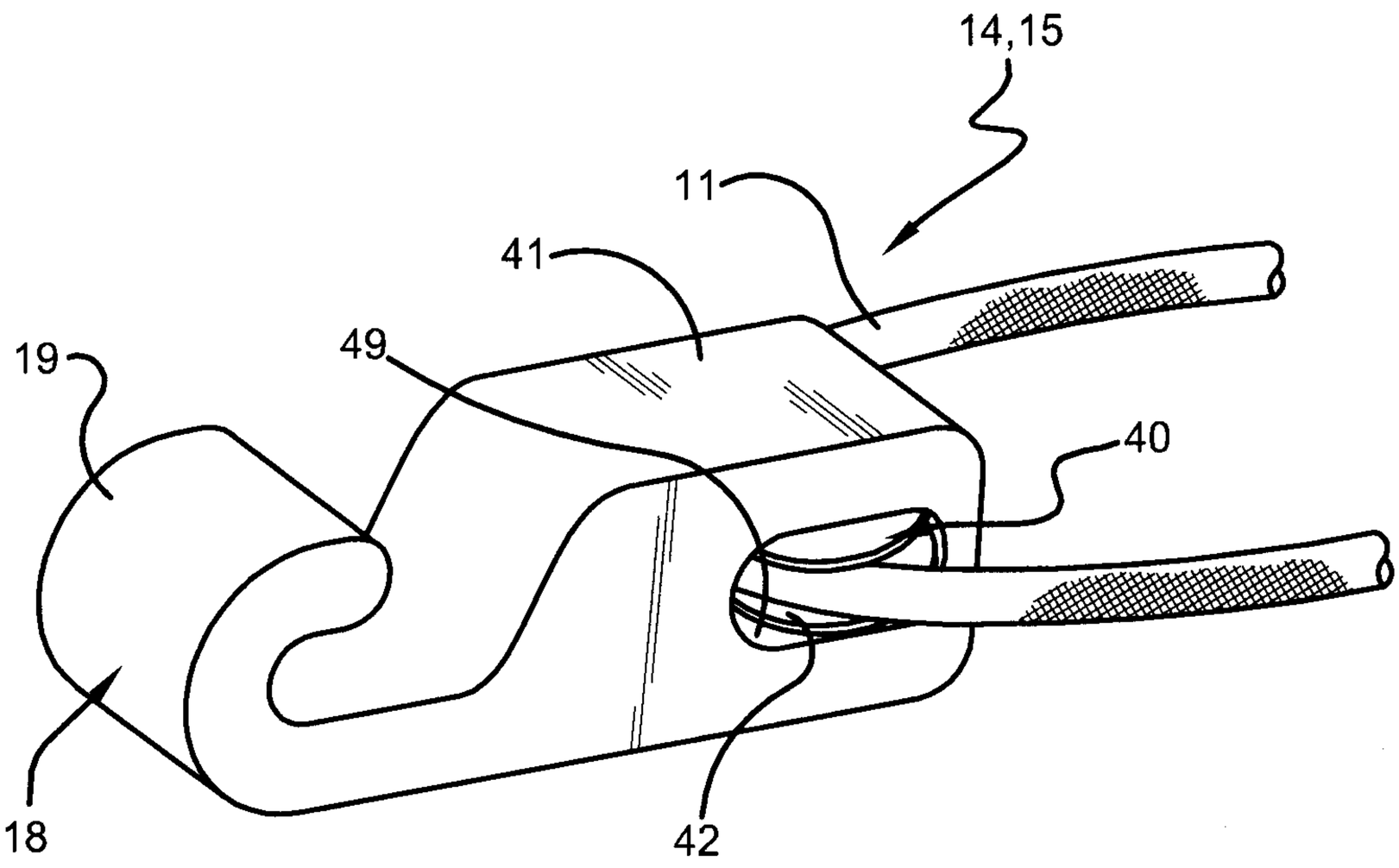


FIG.-4

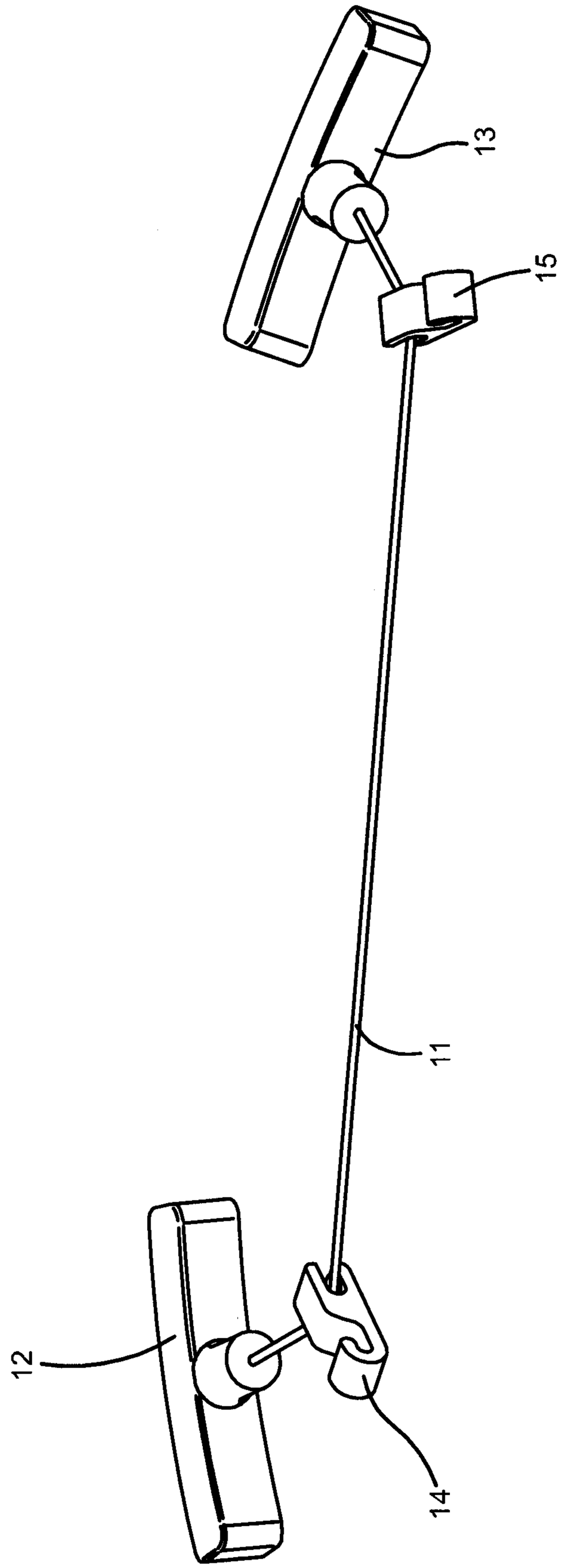


FIG.-5

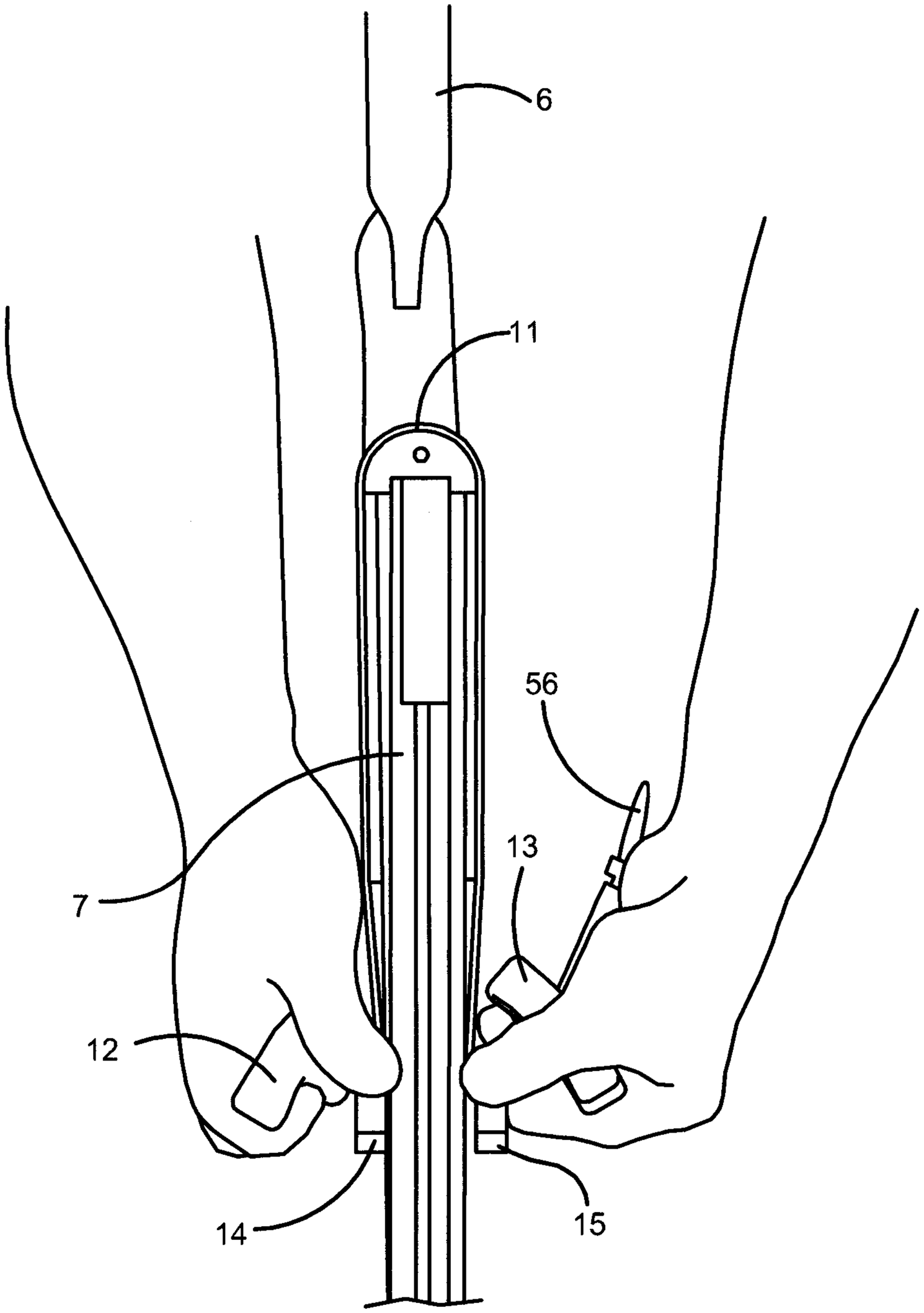


FIG.-6

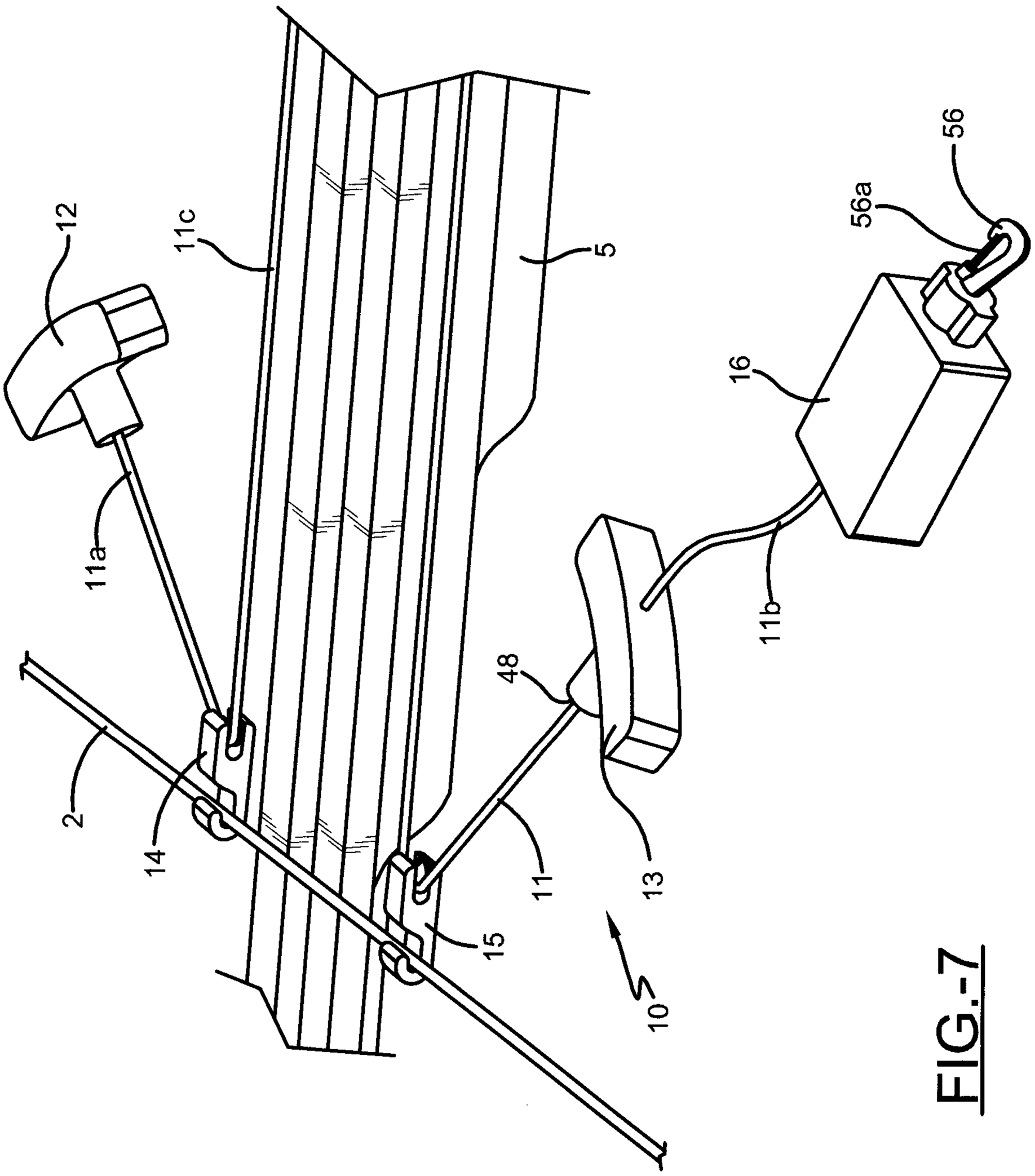


FIG.-7

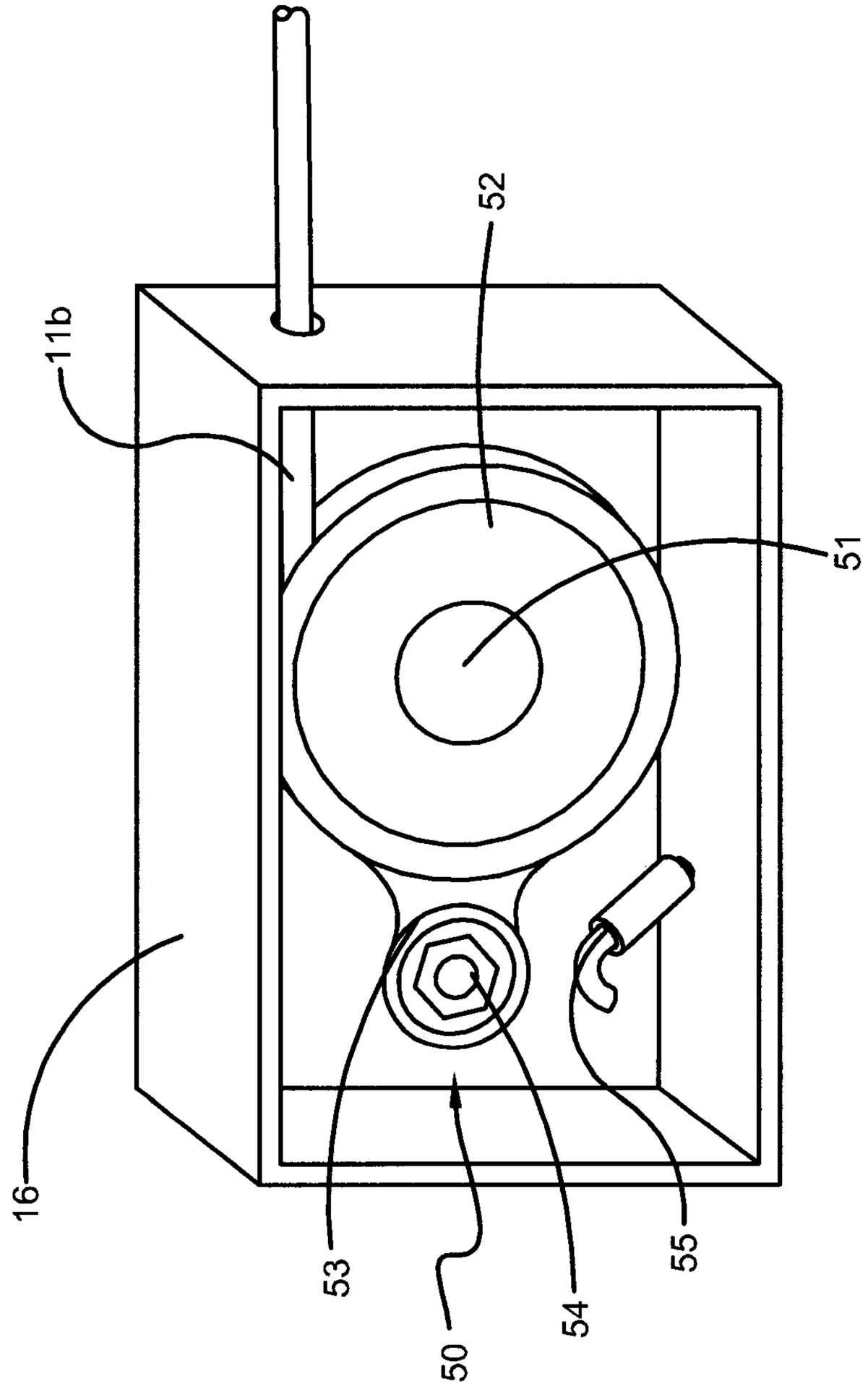


FIG.-8

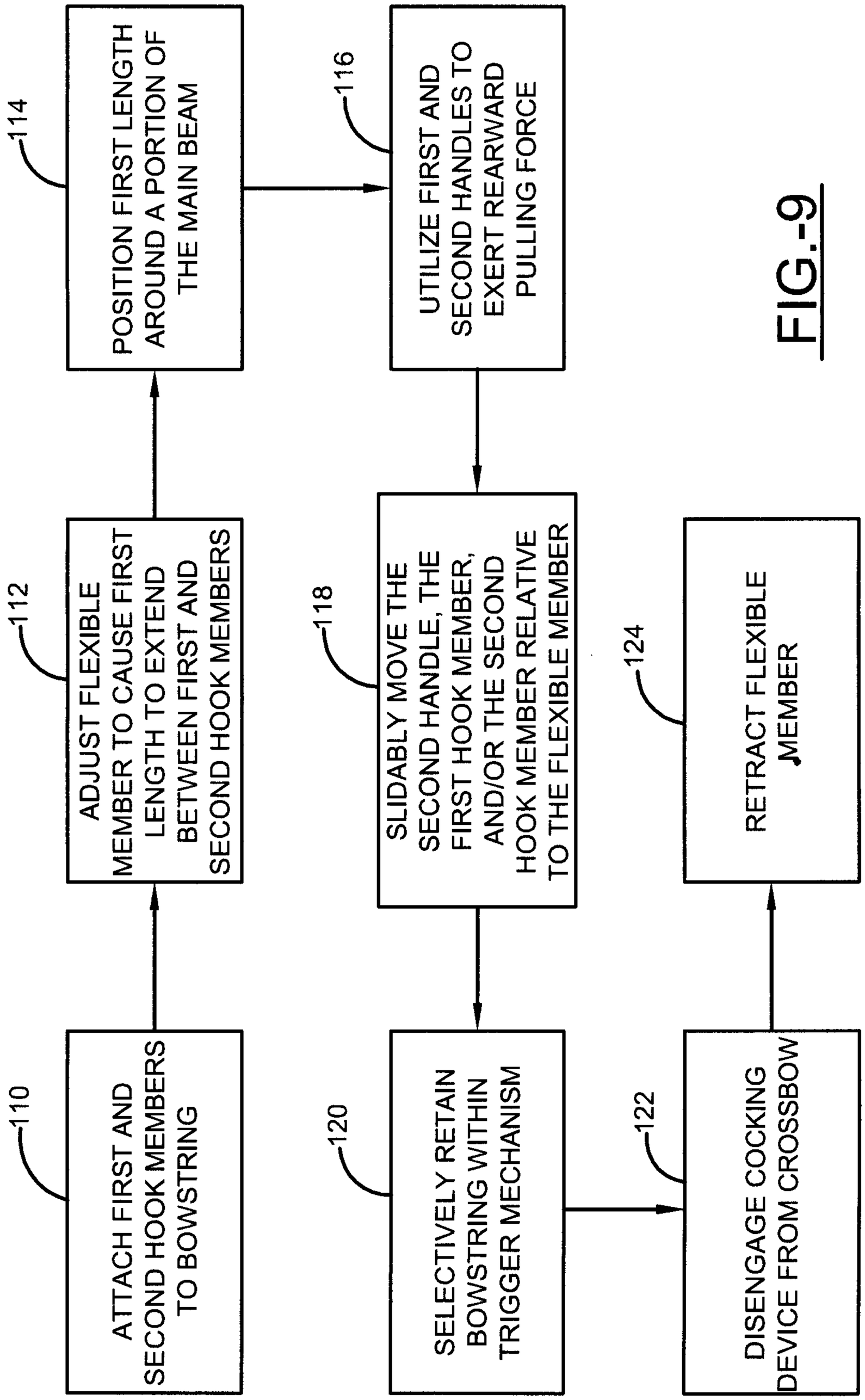

110
ATTACH FIRST AND SECOND HOOK MEMBERS TO BOWSTRING
112
ADJUST FLEXIBLE MEMBER TO CAUSE FIRST LENGTH TO EXTEND BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND HOOK MEMBERS
114
POSITION FIRST LENGTH AROUND A PORTION OF THE MAIN BEAM
116
UTILIZE FIRST AND SECOND HANDLES TO EXERT REARWARD PULLING FORCE
118
SLIDABLY MOVE THE SECOND HANDLE, THE FIRST HOOK MEMBER, AND/OR THE SECOND HOOK MEMBER RELATIVE TO THE FLEXIBLE MEMBER
120
SELECTIVELY RETAIN BOWSTRING WITHIN TRIGGER MECHANISM
122
DISENGAGE COCKING DEVICE FROM CROSSBOW
124
RETRACT FLEXIBLE MEMBER

FIG.-9

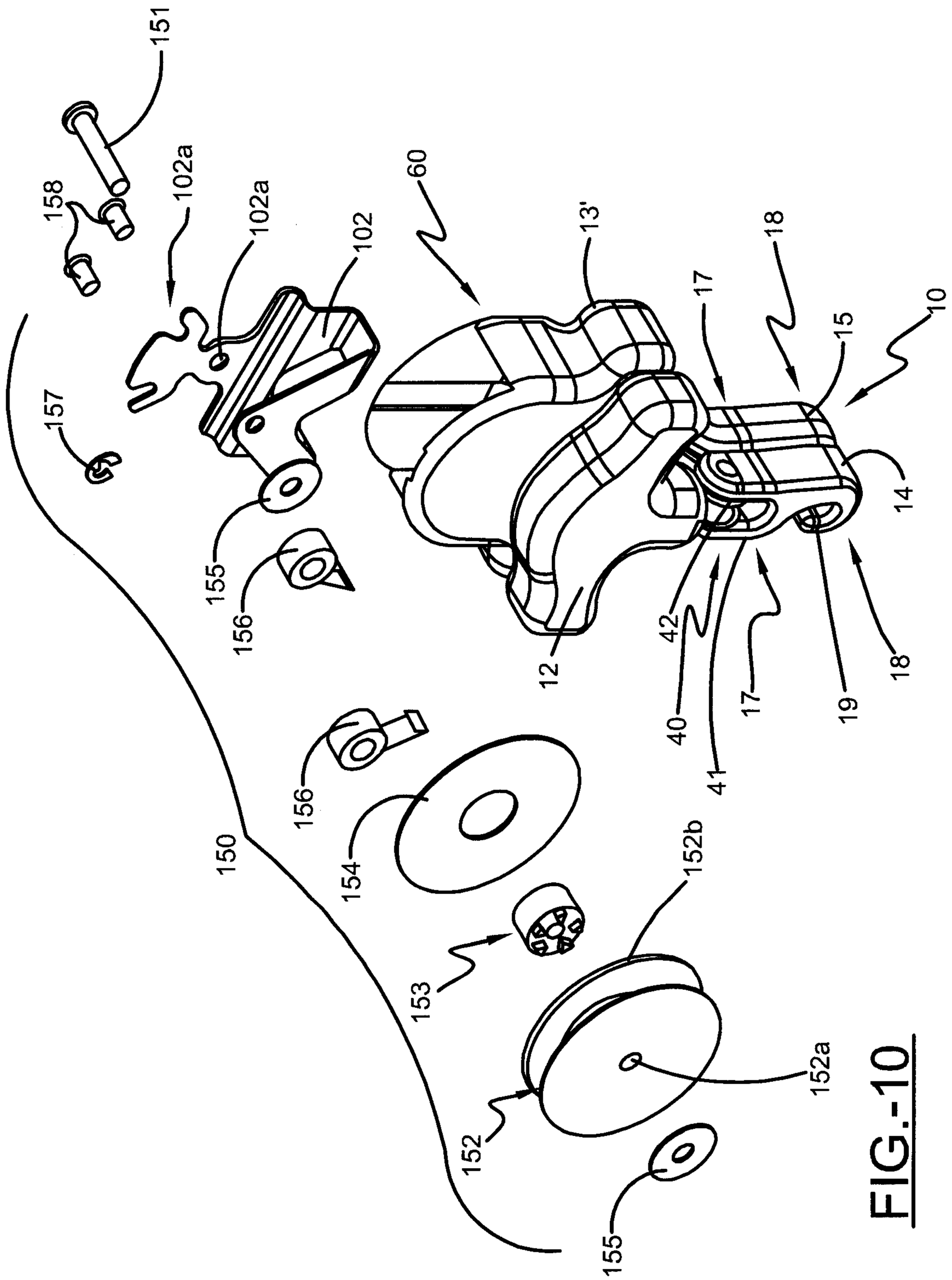

151
158
102a
102a
102
60
13'
18
17
15
10
157
155
156
14
12
42
18
150
156
154
153
152b
40
41
17
19
152
152a
155

FIG.-10

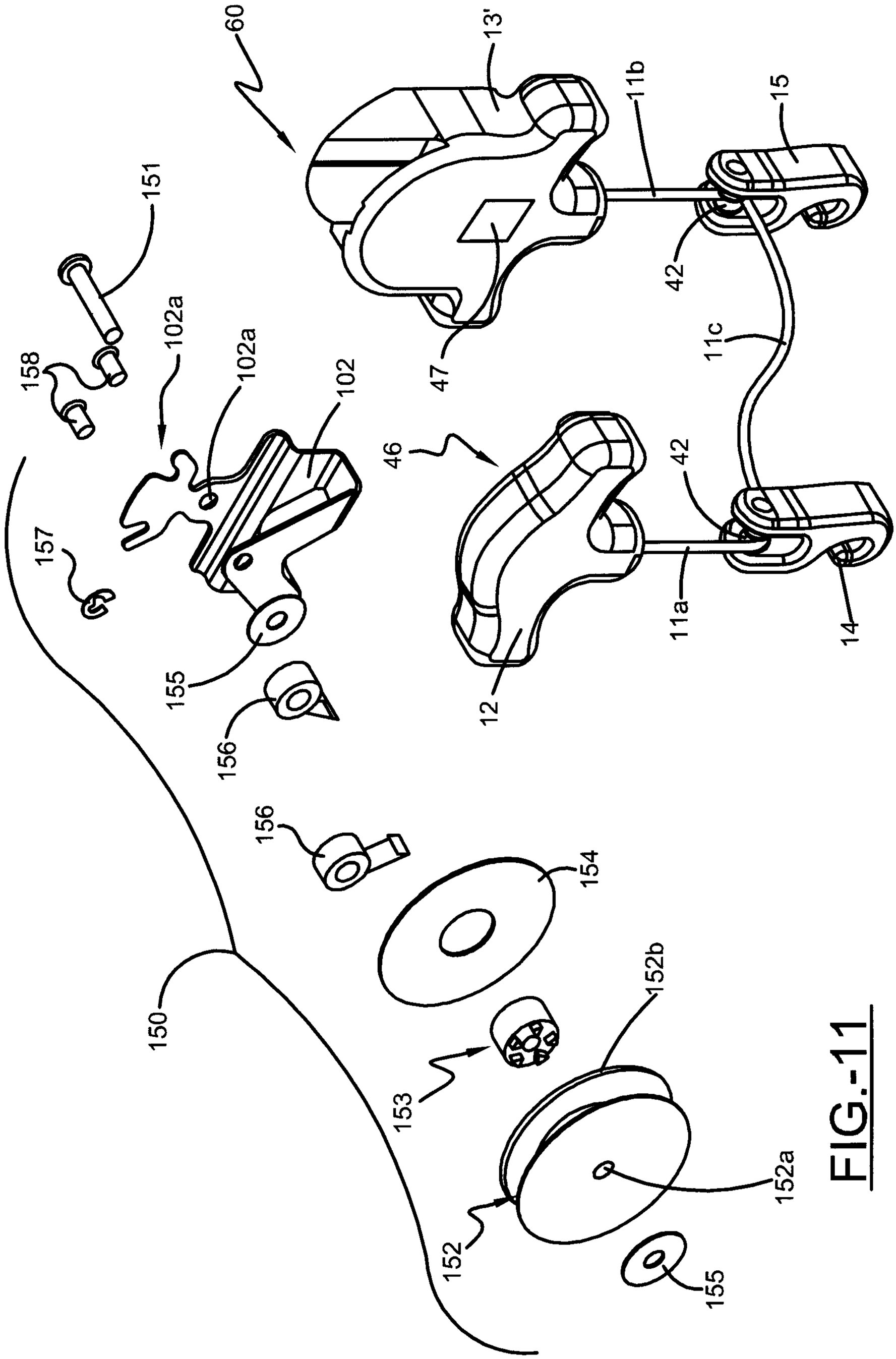

60
13'
11b
15
151
158
102a
102a
102
47
42
11c
46
42
157
11a
14
155
156
12
156
154
150
153
152b
152
152a
155

FIG.-11

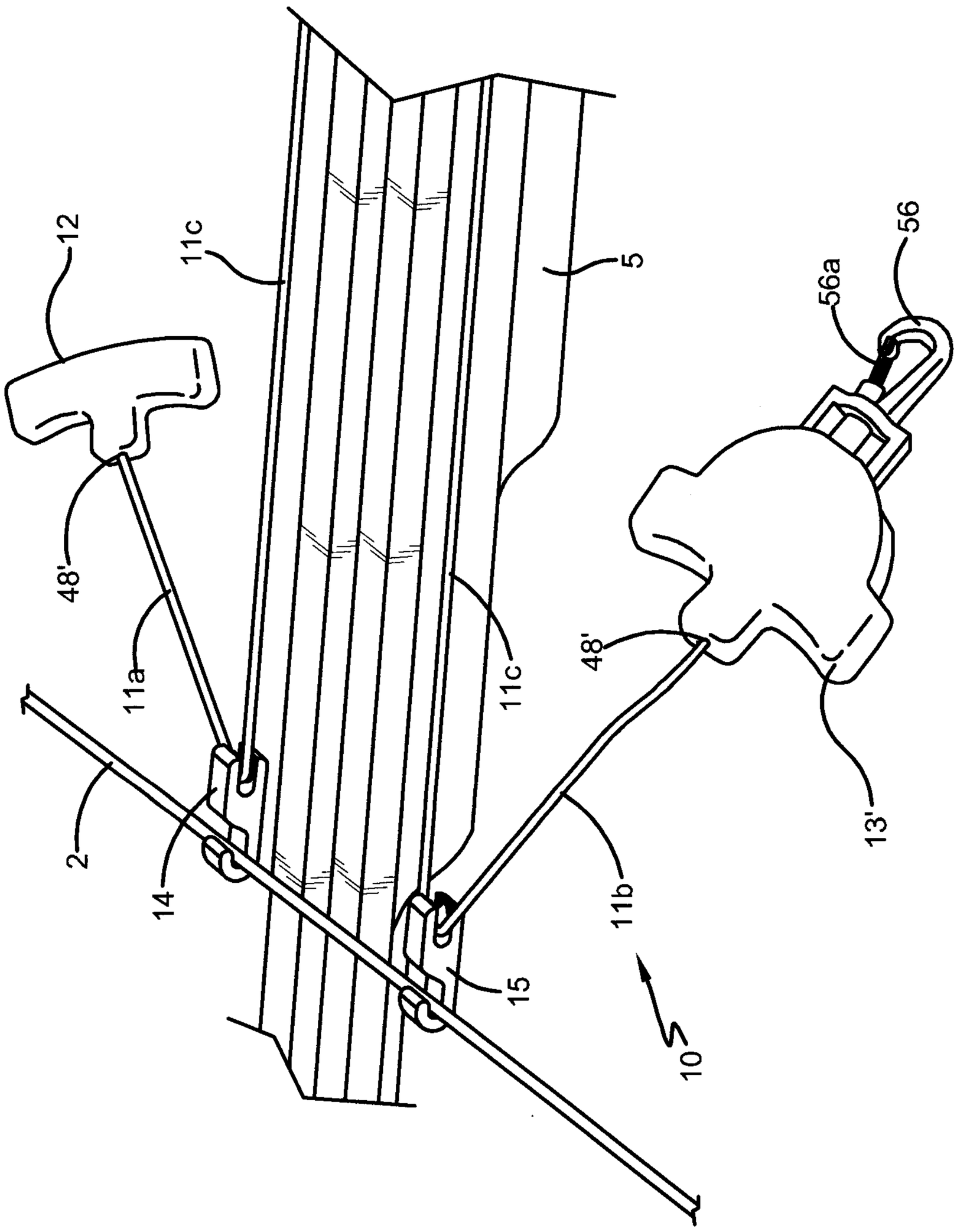
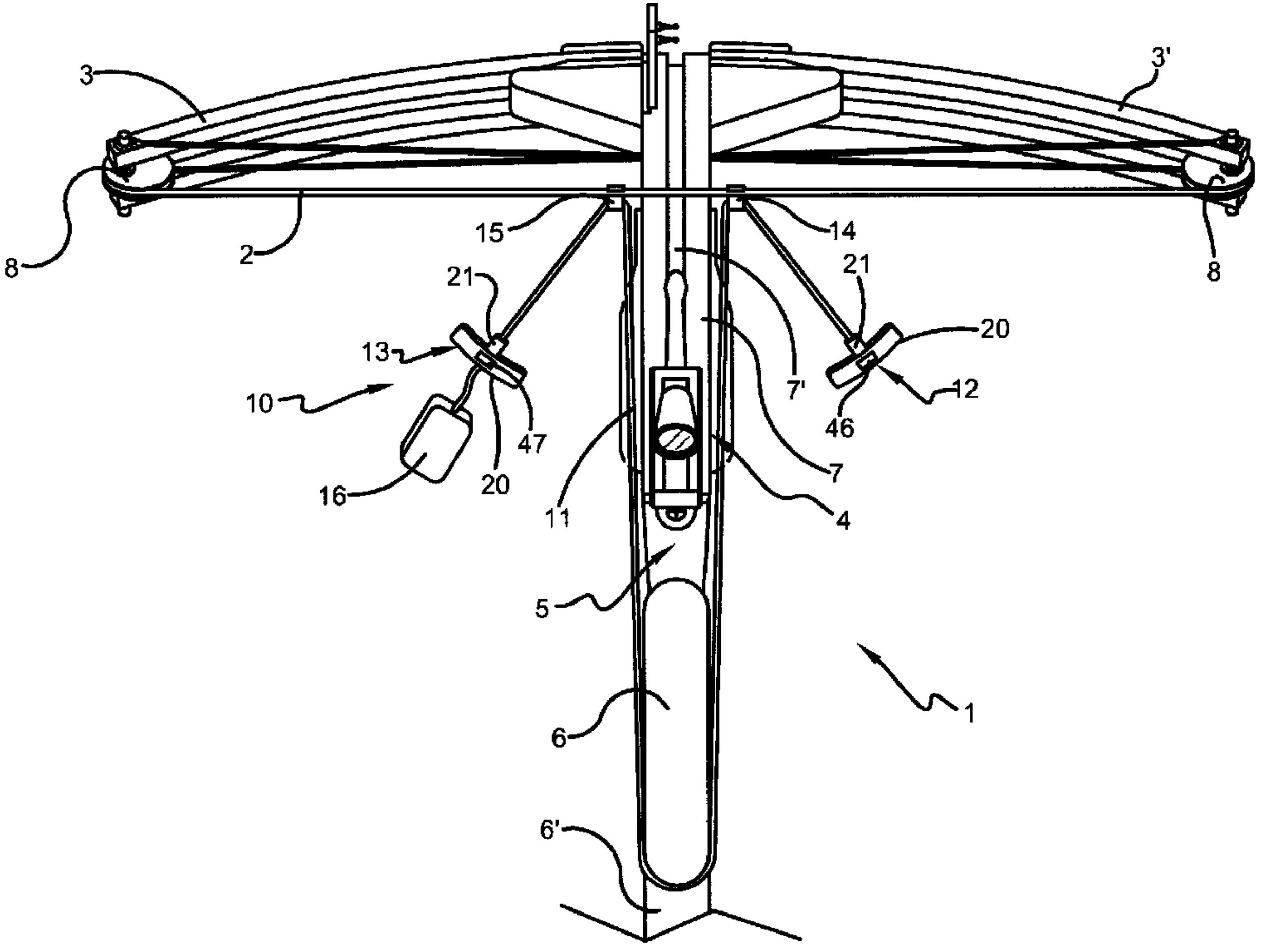


FIG.-12


3
3'
8
2
15
14
8
21
21
13
20
10
7'
12
47
46
16
20
7
11
4
5
1
6
6'