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radially displaceable for engagement with the inner wall of the tubular so as to secure the tubular to the tool. Once the tool is secured to the tubular, the hydraulic motor 10 is activated which rotates the tool 17 and hence the tubular 3 for engagement with a tubular string held in a spider.

The clamp 2 is now released from the tubular 3, and the top drive 13 and hence apparatus 1 is now lifted clear of the tubular 3. The elevator 18 is now swung in line with the apparatus 1 by actuation of the piston and cylinders 19 and 20 (FIG. 1d).

The top drive 13 is then lowered, lowering the elevator 18 over the box 16 of the tubular 3. The slips in the elevator 18 are then set to take the weight of the entire tubular string. The top drive is then raised slightly to enable the slips in the spider to be released and the top drive is then lowered to introduce the tubular string into the borehole.

Referring to FIGS. 2a to 2d there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified by reference numeral 101.

The apparatus 101 comprises an elevator 102 arranged at one end of bails 103, 104. The bails 103, 104 are movably attached to a top drive 105 via axles 106 which are located in eyes 107 in the other end of the bails 103, 104. Piston and cylinders 108, 109 are arranged between the top drive 105 and the bails. One end of the piston and cylinders 108, 109 are movably arranged on axles 110 on the top drive. The other end of the piston and cylinders 108, 109 are movably arranged on axles 111, 112 which are located in lugs 113, 114 located approximately one-third along the length of the bails 103, 109.

The elevator 102 is provided with pins 115 on either side thereof and projecting therefrom. The pins 115 are located in slots 116 and 116g. A piston 117, 118 and cylinder 119, 120 are arranged in each of the bails 103, 104. The cylinders are arranged in slot 121, 122. The piston 117, 118 are connected at their ends to the pins 115. The cylinders 119, 120 are prevented from moving along the bails 103, 104 by cross members 123 and 124. A hole is provided in each of the cross members to allow the pistons to move therethrough.

In use, a tubular 125 is angled from a rack near to the well centre. The tubular may however remain upright in the rack. The clamp 102 is placed around the tubular below a box 126 (FIG. 2a). The top drive is raised on a track on a derrick. The tubular is lifted from the rack and the tubular swings to hang vertically (FIG. 2b). The piston and cylinders 108, 109 are actuated, extending the pistons allowing the bails 103, 104 to move to a vertical position. The tubular 125 is now directly beneath a tool 127 for internally gripping and rotating the tubular 125 (FIG. 2c). The pistons 117, 118 and cylinders 119, 120 are now actuated. The pins 115 follow slot 116 and the clamp 102 moves upwardly, lifting the tubular 125 over the tool 127 (FIG. 2d). The tool 127 can now be actuated to grip the tubular 125.

At this stage the elevator 102 is released and the top drive 105 lowered to enable the tubular 125 to be connected to the string of tubulars in the slips and torqued appropriately by the top drive 105.

The pistons 117, 118 and cylinders 119, 120 are meantime extended so that after the tubular 125 has been connected the top drive 105 can be raised until the elevator 102 is immediately below the box. The elevator 102 is then actuated to grip the tubular 125 firmly. The top drive 105 is then raised to lift the tubular string sufficiently to enable the wedges in the slips to be withdrawn. The top drive 105 is then lower to the drilling platform, the slips applied, the elevator 102 raised for the tubular 125 and the process repeated.

While the foregoing is directed to embodiments of the present invention, other and further embodiments of the

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invention may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof, and the scope thereof is determined by the claims that follow.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, comprising:

connecting an elevator to the top drive or a component attached to the top drive using a pair of bails; using the elevator to move a first tubular to a position below the top drive; gripping an inner wall of the first tubular and supporting the weight of the first tubular with the top drive; and rotating the first tubular using the top drive, thereby connecting the first tubular to a second tubular.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising using the elevator to move the first tubular in relation to the pair of bails towards or away from the top drive for gripping the first tubular.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the first tubular and the second tubular comprise casings.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein moving the first tubular to the position below the top drive comprises moving the first tubular into axial alignment with the top drive.

5. A method of connecting casing sections by using a top drive, comprising:

closing a slip around a first casing section; engaging an elevator with a second casing section; operating a bail actuator to move the elevator and the second casing section into substantial alignment with the top drive;

gripping an inner wall of the second casing section and supporting a weight of the second casing section with the top drive;

rotating the second casing section using the top drive to join the second casing section to the first casing section to form a joint and a casing string;

supporting the weight of the casing string with the top drive; and opening the slip.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the top drive includes at least one radially displaceable gripping element for engagement with the inner wall of the second casing section.

7. The method of claim 5, further comprising compensating for a weight of the second casing section.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein the elevator is coupled to the top drive using at least one bail.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein operating the bail actuator to move the elevator comprises rotating the at least one bail about a substantially horizontal axis.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising moving the second casing section axially relative to the top drive to a position to be gripped by the top drive.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein moving the second casing section axially relative to the top drive comprises moving the elevator closer to a rotational axis of an output of the top drive.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein at least two bails are used to couple the elevator to the top drive.

13. The method of claim 9, further comprising moving the elevator closer to a rotational axis of an output of the top drive.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the top drive includes at least one radially displaceable gripping element for gripping the inner wall of the second casing section.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the gripping element is disposed on a gripping member operatively connected to the top drive.