rotationally locked to facilitate insertion into the casing stand on top of a string being run in the hole. Some set down weight allows top drive rotation to move a multi-ramped mandrel axially because that mandrel is rotationally locked to the housing that is held fast by the spring loaded dogs bearing on the casing. Once the slips are extended with a specified torque applied from the top drive, further setting down weight locks the components and the housing so that applied rotation with setting down weight will turn the casing string but will not torque up the slips beyond their set position which could cause stress cracks to the casing. A return spring returns the components to a rotationally locked position with respect to the housing so the process can be repeated after the slips get retracted with rotation in an intermediate position between hanging and weight fully set down. Components can be rotationally locked when driving in the string into the borehole with backpressure from circulating fluid employed to hold the components in a rotationally locked relation so that the string can be manipulated as it is inserted without slip radial movement in opposed directions.

[0007a] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising: a housing supported by the top drive; a gear driven assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of the tubular by said slip; said selective transmission of rotational input comprises a clutch.

[0007b] According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising: a housing supported by the top drive; a gear driven assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of the tubular by said slip; said selective transmission of rotational input comprises a clutch; said clutch is biased to a first position where rotation of the top drive will not move said actuator member axially.

[0007c] According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising: a

housing supported by the top drive; an assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotational input to movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of a tubular by said slip; said assembly selectively locking said actuator from relative movement with respect to the housing.

[0007d] According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of using a tubular running tool for assembling a string and running the string into a subterranean location, comprising: supporting a running tool at a surface location; providing at least one slip on said running tool to selectively engage and release the tubular upon movement of an actuator with respect to a housing of said running tool; mechanically selectively disabling said actuator from moving with respect to said housing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] FIG. 1 shows the device in the run in position;

[0009] FIG. 2 is the view of FIG. 1 with weight set down before the spring is compressed;

[0010] FIG. 3 is the view of FIG. 2 with the spring compressed just before rotation that will extend the slips;

[0011] FIG. 4 shows the actuating member having moved up as a result of rotation that sets the slips;

[0012] FIG. 5 shows the slips extended on the multiple ramps of the actuating member;

[0013] FIG. 6 is a close up showing three of four slips in the set position;

[0014] FIG. 7 is the view of FIG. 6 with the slips in the retracted position;

[0015] FIG. 8 is a detailed view of the spline inside the housing wall which acts as a rotational lock when there is no set down weight from the top drive;

[0016] FIG. 9 is a section view of an alternative embodiment shown in the suspended position and inserted into the casing;

[0017] FIG. 10 is the view of FIG. 9 with weight set down to then allow slip extension with rotation;

[0018] FIG. 11 is the view of FIG. 10 after rotation that has extended the slips against the casing; and

[0019] FIG. 12 is the view of FIG. 11 showing setting down weight after setting the slips to allow pushing on the casing string and rotated when running in the casing without further extending the slips.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0020] Referring to FIG. 1 a top drive **TD** is schematically illustrated as supporting a top sub **3** at threads **30**. The top sub **3** is rotationally locked to driving nut **1** that is captured above shoulder **32** leaving an exposed annular surface **34** on which spring **5** exerts and upward force. Driving nut **1** is rotationally locked to top sub **3** with locking balls **9** although other ways to rotationally lock can be used. Drive ~~gear~~ nut **1** has an exterior gear pattern or splines **36** that in the FIG. 1 position are engaged with an internal gear or splines **38** on driven nut **2** and with splines **39** on an interior wall of the housing **7** when subjected to the force of spring **5**. Splines **39** are best seen in FIG. 8 when the driving gear **1** is pushed down to expose splines **39**. Driven nut **2** is mounted to rotate in housing components **6** and **7**. Driven nut **2** is connected to actuator **10** at thread **40** such that rotation of the driven nut **2** by driving nut **1** through meshed splines **36** and **38** result in axial translation of actuator **10** into or out of the coils of spring **5**. As better seen in FIG. 5 ramps **42** on actuator **10** engage a parallel pattern of inclined ramps **44** on slip segments ~~46~~ **11** that are mounted for radial extension into casing **14** for contact with the interior of a casing joint **48** that is shown in FIG. 6. A flow passage **51** leads to outlets **55** for circulating fluid as the casing string is lowered into a borehole. A cup seal **12** has a downward orientation to hold pressure in the casing string **14** with returns coming back to the surface outside the casing string **14**.

[0021] To make the actuator **10** move axially, weight is set down with the top drive **TD** pushing the ring **50** against the top **52** of the driving nut **1**, as shown in FIG. 2. Further setting down weight compresses spring 5 and moves the splines **36** out of splines **39** and only into splines 38~~38~~ to create meshing engagement as shown in FIG. 3. Note that in this position the actuator **10** is

about even with the spring support surface **54**. At this point rotation of the top drive **TD** in one direction raises actuator **10** which pulls ramps **42** axially which results in radial movement of the slip segments ~~46~~ 11 out until the wickers or grip profile **56** engages the tubular **14** on surface **48**. With the slips segments ~~46~~ 11 wedged into the tubular **14**, the top drive **TD** is raised up so that the support slips in the rig floor that support the balance of the string below the tubular just threaded to the string, can be removed so that the top drive **TD** with slip segments **46** engaged to the tubular **48** now supports the string but splines have reengaged due to the return force of spring **5** and the fact that weight is no longer being set down as the entire string is hanging on the slip segments. At this point the splines on the driving nut **1** are engaged to splines **39** on the upper housing **7** so that top drive **TD** rotation simply turns the housing **6**, **7** and with it the slip ~~housing~~ **11** that is secured to the housing **6**, **7** ~~with a fastener 4~~. The top drive **TD** can be turned in either direction with the string weight hanging without risk of release of the slips. The driller can watch the weight indicator to determine that the hanging condition of the string is maintained before operation of the top drive **TD** in rotation.

[0022] It should be noted that spring **5** is optional and the same result can be obtained by moving a precise distance in either or both opposed directions with the top drive to get the desired engagement that allows slip extension or tubular rotation with the weight of the string hanging off the top drive as well as the release of the slips from the string when needed.

[0023] In order to release from the string **14** after filling and circulating through the string **14** as it is advanced into the borehole, slips on the rig floor (not shown) are set to support the string **14** from the ~~ring~~ rig floor and allow weight to be set down by lowering the top drive **TD** so that the FIG. 3 position is resumed. At this point the top drive **TD** is made to rotate driving nut 1 and the driven nut 2 in the opposite direction than the direction that set the slip segments **46** to make the actuator **10** move back axially in a downhole direction to allow the slip segments to radially retract. When the actuator **10** moves down it will pull the slip segments **46** inward for a grip release.

[0024] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that spring **5** can take different forms such as a sealed volume with compressible gas inside or a stack of Bellville washers for example. The top sub **3** can be a guide for the

axial movement of the actuator **10** while conducting flow through the cup seal **12**. The rotational lock with balls **9** can be splines or other structures. The design is simple and can be built economically for reliable operation. Setting down weight allows extension or retraction of the slips when accompanied by rotation from the top drive. Without setting down weight and rotating the top drive with the slips extended the tubular supported by the slips turns in tandem with the housing **6,7** and the slips **11** that is non-rotatably attached to it.

[0025] Referring now to FIGS. 9-12 similar parts will have the same number as the above described embodiment. FIG. 9 shows the tool inserted into the tubular **14** to the point of the travel stop **200** being positioned just above the top **202** of the tubular **14**. Actuator **10** is in a down position so that the slips **11** are retracted. Spring **18** pushes up on driving nut **1** which is rotationally locked at splines **39** to the housing **7**. Drag block housing **120** is attached to housing **7** and has drag blocks **121** biased by springs **122** against the outer wall **204** of the tubular **14**, which can be the topmost stand of a string of casing being run in or removed into or from a borehole that is not shown. Alternatively housing **120** can be inserted into the tubular **14** while still mounted to the housing **7** so that the inside wall **206** can be contacted by the drag blocks **121**. The force of springs **122** on drag blocks **121** hold the housing **7** as the top sub **3** is put into position to rotate by a downward force to release from driving nut **1** as shown in FIG. 2. This setting down weight compresses spring ~~18~~ 5 to release parts for relative rotation as a kind of clutch. The top sub **3** in the FIG. 10 position will turn in tandem with driving nut **1** and driven nut **2** and relative to the housing **7**. That rotation raises the actuator **10** that is rotationally locked but axially movable due to the presence of thread **208**. As the actuator **10** rises the ramps **42** push out the slips **11** against the tubular **14** until the needed grip torque is sensed at the top drive that is not shown. Further setting down weight on top sub **3** will engage splines **101** and **102** so that all the parts **1**, **2** and **3** are again locked to the housing **7** which means they all turn together and further force to extend the slips against the tubular **14** is precluded. This avoid overstressing the tubular **14** after setting the slips in it during efforts to advance the tubular string and rotate it to advance the string into a borehole should there be some resistance to running in the hole such as a deviation, or hole partial collapse or other reasons to resist the advancement

of the string associated with tubular **14**. FIG. 12 shows advancing and rotating the string in a manner that will not further extend the slips **11** when setting down weight.

[0026] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the drag blocks help to hold the housing fixed with respect to the tubular **14** so as to overcome friction in thread **208** when the slips **11** are extended by rotation of parts **1**, **2** and **3** in tandem to raise the actuator **10** to extend slips **11**. For insertion in FIG. 9, the spring ~~18~~ 5 insures that the parts in the housing **7** are locked to it so none of the parts relatively rotate. With some set down weight a second position is assumed where the drag blocks hold the housing **7** to the tubular **14** as items **1**, **2** and **3** rotate together relative to the actuator **10** that cannot rotate but can move axially due to thread **208**. The slips now can be extended with the top drive to the required torque. Setting down weight further to a third position again locks items **1**, **2** and **3** to the housing **7** so that rotating housing **7** will just rotate the tubular **14** without extending or retracting the slips **11**. Picking up allows spring **18** to get the parts **1**, **2** and **3** back to their original positions in FIG. 9.

[0027] The above description is illustrative of the preferred embodiment and many modifications may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the invention whose scope is to be determined from the literal and equivalent scope of the claims below:

We claim:

1. A top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising:

a housing supported by the top drive;

a gear driven assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of the tubular by said slip.

2. The assembly of claim **1**, wherein:

said selective transmission of rotational input comprises a clutch.

3. The assembly of claim **2**, wherein:

said clutch is biased to a first position where rotation of the top drive will not move said actuator member axially.

4. The assembly of claim **3**, wherein:

said bias is overcome with set down weight on a driving gear that at least in part acts as said clutch.

5. The assembly of claim **3**, wherein:

said bias is accomplished with a coiled spring.

6. The assembly of claim **3**, wherein:

axial movement of said driving gear against said bias maintains engagement with a driven gear for tandem rotation while disengaging said driving gear from said housing.

7. The assembly of claim **6**, wherein:

rotation of said driven gear drives said actuator member axially.

8. The assembly of claim **7**, wherein:

said driven gear is operably connected to said actuator member by a thread.

9. The assembly of claim **8**, wherein:

said actuator member drives said slip exclusively in a radial direction.

10. The assembly of claim **9**, wherein:

said at least one slip has an elongated shape with a plurality of driven ramps that are in alignment with a plurality of driving ramps on said actuator member.

11. The assembly of claim **9**, further comprising:

a top sub adapted to be connected to the top drive and rotationally locked to said driving gear.

12. The assembly of claim **11**, wherein:

said driving gear and driven gears are are rotationally locked to said housing under a force provided by said biasing.

13. The assembly of claim **12**, wherein:

said driving gear is released from being rotationally locked to said housing with a set down force that overcomes said biasing.

14. The assembly of claim **13**, wherein:

said slip retains the tubular with said slip extended when the weight of said tubular is supported by said extended slip such that rotation of said housing by the top drive rotates the tubular.

15. The assembly of claim **1**, wherein:

said gear driven assembly converts rotational input from the top drive into axial movement of said actuator member using a threaded connection therebetween.

16. The assembly of claim **1**, wherein:

said gear driven assembly is selectively rotationally locked to said housing under the force of said bias.

17. The assembly of claim **1**, wherein:

said actuator member drives said slip exclusively in a radial direction.

18. The assembly of claim **1**, wherein:

said at least one slip has an elongated shape with a plurality of driven ramps that are in alignment with a plurality of driving ramps on said actuator member.

19. The assembly of claim **11**, wherein:

said top sub comprises a passage therethrough that acts as an axial movement guide for said actuator member;

said actuator member has an actuator passage therethrough so that there is flow communication through said passages in said top sub and said actuator member.

20. A top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising:

a housing supported by the top drive;

an assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of a tubular by said slip;

said assembly rotationally locked to said housing as said slip is inserted into the tubular and then rotationally unlocked with applied set down weight such that said slip can be extended or retracted and then rotationally locked again with a further increase in applied set down weight or fluid backpressure in the tubular to allow axial and rotational force to be applied to the tubular without relative movement of said slip.

21. The tool of claim **20**, further comprising:

a drag block assembly mounted to said housing for selective contact with the tubular to hold said housing against rotation when said assembly is rotationally unlocked from said housing and rotated by said top drive.

22. The tool of claim **21**, wherein:

said assembly comprises an actuator that is movable axially and locked rotationally to said housing.

23. The tool of claim **22**, wherein:

said actuator is engaged to a rotating component of said assembly by a thread.

24. The tool of claim **23**, wherein:

rotation of said rotating component in opposed directions moves said actuator axially in opposed directions using said thread.

25. The tool of claim **24**, wherein:

said drag block assembly maintaining said housing stationary as said rotating component is rotated by overcoming frictional forces in said thread.

26. The tool of claim **25**, wherein:

said rotating component further comprises a top sub driven by the top drive that selectively engages said actuator to preclude movement of said slip as weight is set on said top sub and a rotational force is applied to said top sub by the top drive.

27. The tool of claim **26**, wherein:

a return spring is compressed to engage said top sub with said actuator.

28. The tool of claim **27**, wherein:

setting down weight on said top sub and against said return spring to a point short of engaging said actuator allows said top sub to rotate a driving and driven nuts in tandem with respect to said housing that is held by said drag blocks to the tubular.

29. The tool of claim **28**, wherein:

said thread is located on said driven nut.

30. The tool of claim **29**, wherein:

said at least one slip comprises a plurality of slips driven by said actuator on a series of multiple ramp surfaces.

31. A tubular running tool for assembling a string and running the string into a subterranean location, comprising:

supporting a running tool at a surface location for rotation and setting down weight;

providing at least one slip to selectively engage and release the tubular upon opposed axial movement of an actuator with respect to a housing of said running tool;

disabling said actuator from moving axially with respect to said housing when inserting said slip in the tubular and when a set down weight of a predetermined value is applied to said running tool with a slip extended in contact with the tubular;

enabling said actuator to move axially with a set down weight of less than said predetermined value and with an applied rotational force to said running tool for extension or retraction of said slip.

32. The method of claim **31**, comprising:

driving said actuator axially with a thread.

33. The method of claim **32**, comprising:

retaining said housing to the tubular with at least one biased drag block to overcome frictional resistance in said thread.

34. The method of claim **33**, comprising:

rotating a top sub, extending into said housing, with a top drive;

rotationally locking said actuator to said housing;

selectively engaging said actuator with said top sub such that rotation of said top sub rotates said housing and the tubular when said slip engages the tubular.

35. The method of claim **34**, comprising:

biasing said top sub away from said actuator.

36. The method of claim **35**, comprising:

locking said top sub to said housing under the force of said biasing.

37. The method of claim **31**, comprising:

releasing said top sub for relative rotation with respect to said housing by partly compressing a spring providing said biasing.

38. The method of claim **37**, comprising:

driving a driving nut and a driven nut in tandem with said top sub and relative to said housing, held by said drag block, when said spring is compressed;

providing said thread in said driven nut.

We claim:

1. A top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising:

a housing supported by the top drive;

a gear driven assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of the tubular by said slip;

said selective transmission of rotational input comprises a clutch.

2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein:

said gear driven assembly converts rotational input from the top drive into axial movement of said actuator member using a threaded connection therebetween.

3. The assembly of claim 1, wherein:

said gear driven assembly is selectively rotationally locked to said housing under the force of a bias.

4. The assembly of claim 1, wherein:

said actuator member drives said slip exclusively in a radial direction.

5. The assembly of claim 1, wherein:

said at least one slip has an elongated shape with a plurality of driven ramps that are in alignment with a plurality of driving ramps on said actuator member.

6. A top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising:

a housing supported by the top drive;

a gear driven assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotation to axial movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of the tubular by said slip;

said selective transmission of rotational input comprises a clutch;

said clutch is biased to a first position where rotation of the top drive will not move said actuator member axially.

7. The assembly of claim 6, wherein:

said bias is overcome with set down weight on a driving gear that at least in part acts as said clutch.

8. The assembly of claim 6, wherein:

said bias is accomplished with a coiled spring.

9. The assembly of claim 6, wherein:

axial movement of said driving gear against said bias maintains engagement with a driven gear for tandem rotation while disengaging said driving gear from said housing.

10. The assembly of claim 9, wherein:

rotation of said driven gear drives said actuator member axially.

11. The assembly of claim 10, wherein:

said driven gear is operably connected to said actuator member by a thread.

12. The assembly of claim 11, wherein:

said actuator member drives said slip exclusively in a radial direction.

13. The assembly of claim 12, wherein:

said at least one slip has an elongated shape with a plurality of driven ramps that are in alignment with a plurality of driving ramps on said actuator member.

14. The assembly of claim 12, further comprising:

a top sub adapted to be connected to the top drive and rotationally locked to said driving gear.

15. The assembly of claim 14, wherein:

said driving gear and driven gear are rotationally locked to said housing under a force provided by said biasing.

16. The assembly of claim 15, wherein:

said driving gear is released from being rotationally locked to said housing with a set down force that overcomes said biasing.

17. The assembly of claim 16, wherein:

said slip retains the tubular with said slip extended when the weight of said tubular is supported by said extended slip such that rotation of said housing by the top drive rotates the tubular.

18. The assembly of claim 14, wherein:

said top sub comprises a passage therethrough that acts as an axial movement guide for said actuator member;

said actuator member has an actuator passage therethrough so that there is flow communication through said passages in said top sub and said actuator member.

19. A top drive operated tubular running tool assembly, comprising:

a housing supported by the top drive;

an assembly in said housing to selectively transmit rotational input from the top drive and convert such rotational input to movement of an actuator member operably linked to at least one slip for selective grip and release of a tubular by said slip;

said assembly selectively locking said actuator from relative movement with respect to the housing.

20. The tool of claim 19, further comprising:

a drag block assembly mounted to said housing for selective contact with the tubular to hold said housing against rotation as said assembly is rotationally unlocked from said housing and rotated by said top drive.

21. The tool of claim 19, wherein:

said assembly comprises an actuator that is movable axially.

22. The tool of claim 21, wherein:

said actuator is engaged to a rotating component of said assembly by a thread.

23. The tool of claim 22, wherein:

rotation of said rotating component in opposed directions moves said actuator axially in opposed directions using said thread.

24. The tool of claim 23, wherein:

said drag block assembly maintaining said housing stationary as said rotating component is rotated by overcoming frictional forces in said thread.

25. The tool of claim 24, wherein:

said rotating component further comprises a top sub driven by the top drive that selectively engages said actuator to preclude movement of said slip as weight from the top drive is set on said top sub and a rotational force is applied to said top sub by the top drive.

26. The tool of claim 25, wherein:

a return spring is compressed to engage said top sub with said actuator.

27. The tool of claim 26, wherein:

setting down top drive weight on said top sub and against said return spring to a point short of engaging said actuator allows said top sub to rotate a driving and driven nuts in tandem with respect to said housing that is held by said drag blocks to the tubular.

28. The tool of claim 27, wherein:

said thread is located on said driven nut.

29. The tool of claim 28, wherein:

said at least one slip comprises a plurality of slips driven by said actuator on a series of multiple ramp surfaces.

30. A method of using a tubular running tool for assembling a string and running the string into a subterranean location, comprising:

supporting a running tool at a surface location;

providing at least one slip on said running tool to selectively engage and release the tubular upon movement of an actuator with respect to a housing of said running tool;

mechanically selectively disabling said actuator from moving with respect to said housing.

31. The method of claim 30, comprising:

driving said actuator axially with a thread.

32. The method of claim 31, comprising:

retaining said housing to the tubular with at least one biased drag block to overcome frictional resistance in said thread.

33. The method of claim 32, comprising:

rotating a top sub, extending into said housing, with a top drive;

rotationally locking said actuator to said housing;

selectively engaging said actuator with said top sub such that rotation of said top sub rotates said housing and the tubular when said slip engages the tubular.

34. The method of claim 33, comprising:

biasing said top sub away from said actuator.

35. The method of claim 34, comprising:

locking said top sub to said housing under the force of said biasing.

36. The method of claim 30, comprising:

releasing said top sub for relative rotation with respect to said housing by partly compressing a spring providing said biasing.

37. The method of claim 36, comprising:

driving a driving nut and a driven nut in tandem with said top sub and relative to said housing, held by said drag block, when said spring is compressed;

providing said thread in said driven nut.

38. The method of claim 30, comprising:

enabling said actuator to move axially with a set down weight of said running tool of less than said predetermined value and with an applied rotational force to said running tool for extension or retraction of said slip.