

## ITALY.

"The *clôture* exists in the Italian Parliament," writes Sir A. Paget, in reporting to Lord Granville. "It may be demanded by one or more members, at any time during a discussion. On its being demanded, the President consults the Chamber. One member only has the right of speaking against the *clôture* before it is pronounced; but, once the *clôture* has been decided by the Chamber and pronounced by the President, the debate ceases, and no further speaking is permitted, unless some member, who may have been personally alluded to in the course of the debate, demands to speak on a personal matter (*per un fatto personale*), but he is bound to confine himself to the personal explanation, and must not enter into the subject-matter of the debate. Any member, however, who may have given notice of an Order of the Day before the *clôture* has been pronounced, has the right of developing it after it has been pronounced. The President has the right of suspending or even of closing the sitting, but in either case, on the Chamber re-assembling, business is resumed at the point where it was interrupted."

## NETHERLANDS.

As regards the *clôture*, the rules of the two Chambers of the States-General are essentially the same. Those adopted by the Second Chamber stand as follow: "Every motion of order for the closing of the debate must, before the President can put it to the vote, be supported by at least five members. The motion for the *clôture* must not be accompanied with reasons. No debate can take place on the motion for the *clôture*; but the President asks, before putting it to the vote, whether the Ministers or Commissaries of the King, or the proposers, desire to speak further on the question under discussion."

## PORTUGAL.

According to the Standing Order of the Chamber of Peers, "No Peer shall be entitled to ask that the opinion of the Chamber shall be taken as to whether the matter has been discussed, unless at least two Peers shall have spoken in favour of the question and two against it; in which case he will ask leave to speak, stating at once that he does so in order to consult the Chamber as to the closing of the discussion, and then none of the Peers who may have already asked to speak will be allowed to do so."

In the Chamber of Deputies, there is no power to ask that discussion be closed; but the Standing Orders contain the following provisions:—

"Art. 141. Any Deputy who shall have obtained permission to speak shall be entitled to do so as long as he may think proper. No one can interrupt him without his express consent, unless he should deviate from the order of discussion, either by any lengthy wanderings to another matter, or by making use of any insulting or offensive words, or, in fine, by infringing in any way the provisions contained in these Standing Rules. In these cases the President will call him to order in accordance with these Standing Rules. (1.) Should the President fail to comply with this duty, any Deputy may call upon him to do so, but he must never address the Deputy who may be speaking personally. (2.) Any Deputy who shall avail himself of the power accorded to him in the foregoing section, is bound to give his reasons for his application to the President, should he be required to do so.

"Art. 142. Any Deputy who may have been called to order is bound to submit to the ruling of the President, saving an appeal to a special vote of the Chamber, for which he may apply in the event of his being of opinion that he has not been out of order. The President cannot refuse to allow a Deputy to speak who, after being called to order, shall submit to his ruling, but shall be desirous to explain his conduct."

## SPAIN.

Mr. L. S. Sackville West supplies to Lord Granville the following "Memorandum on the Working of the *Clôture* as it exists in Spain.—The *clôture* in Spain may be said to exist indirectly, and to result in the action allowed to the President on the order of parliamentary discussion. This action may be brought to bear by him at his own discretion, in order to postpone the discussion of any question in the Orders of the Day before the Chamber, until the next sitting. The question next in order must then be debated. The effect of this procedure is to facilitate Government business, by enabling them either to adjourn or bring on any particular discussion during any particular sitting: in fact, it enables them to arrange the business before the Chamber as best suits their convenience. The President has not the power of arbitrarily declaring the sitting closed, and can only do so in the case of general disorder in the Chamber which cannot otherwise be dealt with. The Presidents of both Chambers are virtually nominated by the Government in power, although in theory elected irrespective of political bias. Their action, therefore, on all discussion, may be said to emanate directly from the Ministry, which thus indirectly obtains the control, more or less, over all debates on the questions of the Order of the Day."

In a second memorandum, Mr. West says, "The *clôture*, as commonly understood, exists only indirectly in the Spanish legislative bodies, and its procedure is as follows: Any deputy can move, during a political debate, that the question before the Chamber be not discussed, and this motion has preference over every other. It is then taken into consideration, put to the vote, and, if carried, closes the debate on the previous question. Such a course, however, cannot be pursued when any constitutional law proposed by Government is under discussion, although recourse may be had to it in the case of the discussion of a law proposed by any individual Deputy."

In each Chamber, only three speakers are, as a rule, allowed to speak on each side in a debate, but in extraordinary cases four are permitted to do so, and "no debate can be concluded until they have done so." The speakers "are chosen simply by priority of inscription when the debate is announced." No speech can be prolonged for more than one sitting without permission of the Chamber; but "the Chamber has the faculty of declaring a sitting a permanent sitting."