“Trajectory of Disenchantment.
A Freetown Writer and the Insolubility of the Creole Problematic”

by

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To Mrs. Scott, who encouraged me to want something bigger.

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Abstract

The Sierra Leonean Creoles, formed by a conglomeration of black returnees to Africa, arrived over the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century from Britain, Nova Scotia, the West Indies, and other parts of Africa. Heavily influenced by the British, their culture set them apart from the surrounding natives. That distinction resulted in critical identity problems as British philanthropy turned into colonial racism. The Rambler was a contributor to the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* from 1913 to 1919 and from 1929 to 1939. His work suggests that he was an energetic and informed thinker. Historians use him to support points concerning Creole and West African history, but do not examine him completely. His work, examined holistically, reveals a Creole still struggling with British abandonment, native encroachment, and Creole obstinacy while clinging to the civilizing mission. His struggle fails and eventually he dismisses the civilizing morality, subscribing instead to a racially assertive morality.

List of Abbreviations Used

GCI	Gold Coast Independent
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
NDT	Nigerian Daily Times
SLWN	Sierra Leone Weekly News
WAYL	West African Youth League

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Chapter 1
Introduction

This work seeks to add to the existing historiography of early twentieth century Sierra Leonean cultural and political dynamics through the closer examination of a prominent Freetown journalist. While he has been treated in the historiography, the treatment has been narrow and selective. This work aims to explore the story of how one writer's perspective on some of the cultural and political struggles within Sierra Leone changed during the first few decades of the twentieth century and during the years leading up to the Second World War. The aim is not so much to revise extant literature, but to examine the Rambler using a different framework from that which historians have traditionally used to discuss Sierra Leonean history.

The subject of this work, the Rambler, was a pseudonymous contributor to the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (SLWN). His column, "Rambling Talks," appeared regularly in the paper from 1913 until 1919, and then again from 1929 until 1939. While he discussed local issues, like the effect of drought relief[1] and problems with Freetown's infrastructural safety,[2] he did not limit himself to being a commentator on local events and problems. His commentary on international affairs displayed a competence that tended to focus on issues concerning either the Empire or race. For instance, he discussed in detail aspects of the First World War,[3] cited newsprint consumption in India,[4] and noted a racist judiciary in the American South during the mid-thirties.[5] Over the course of his career, he underwent a gradual, marked transformation from a convinced, passionate

[1] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 24, 1913, p. 6.
[2] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 6, 1929, p. 8.
[3] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 24, 1914, p. 6.
[4] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 19, 1913, p. 6.
[5] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 9, 1935, p. 5. Here he referred to the Scottsboro case.

advocate of the British Empire and its civilizing mission to an oftentimes fiery supporter of a highly critical opposition to the colonial enterprise and the rest of the West with which he had grown disillusioned. That transformation and some of its aspects are what this work examines in an effort to better understand -- at an individual level -- the Creole struggle between admiring Empire and advocating independence.

Historians have suggested the Rambler can be used as a node of popular political opinion, but have used him in isolated contexts. Leo Spitzer quotes him in two contexts, the first being the manifestations of Creole loyalty during the First World War,[6] and the second being the emergence in the late 1930s of the West African Youth League (WAYL), an organization highly critical of colonial corruption and racism.[7] Spitzer sporadically uses the Rambler as supportive primary material, leaving unexplored the transition that occurred between the loyal commentator calling for the creation of the "King's Own Creole Boys" for service on the front lines[8] and the angry defender of the Youth League demanding reparations for slavery and colonialism.[9] Akintola Wyse uses him much more consistently while discussing the problems facing the Sierra Leonean leaders within the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) in creating a broad-based, popular political movement that could articulate the wants and needs of West Africans to the Colonial Office.[10] But he only brings forward the Rambler's comments on and criticisms of those leaders, oversimplifying the Rambler's position on

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[6] Leo Spitzer, The Creoles of Sierra Leone (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974): pp. 155, 158.
[7] Ibid., p. 192-194 and Spitzer and LaRay Denzer, "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League, Part II: The Sierra Leone Period, 1938-1945," International Journal of African Historical Studies 6, 4 (1973): p. 576.
[8] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 7, 1914, p. 13, which Spitzer cites on p. 155.
[9] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 2, 1938, p. 9, which Spitzer cites on p. 193.
[10] Akintola Wyse, H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): pp. 34, 115, 121, 133.

Protectorate, Colonial, and international politics. S.K.B. Asante goes beyond the Sierra Leonean context, harvesting an edition of *Rambling Talks*[11] to outline the racial context in which Africans began to view the League of Nations following its failure to prevent the Ethiopian Crisis.[12] While these separate uses of the Rambler are not without merit, they certainly do not provide a full explanation of the evolution of his position. Instead, he is plucked from the primary material in a very reduced form in order to support these historians' points. This work attempts to allow the Rambler's ideas to come forward in a much fuller and more continuous sense than these selective and scattered references within the secondary material allow.

It is not the intent of this paper to use him to draw or represent generalities over the West African, Sierra Leonean or Creole public. A general lack of feedback from the public to the Rambler, in the form for example of letters to the editor, makes it difficult to determine just how representative of Sierra Leonean public opinion he can be understood to be. Regardless, the Rambler's commentary addressed some of the fundamental questions that rose surrounding identities within Sierra Leone. This work aims to outline one commentator's very public struggle with the cultural and political problems that Creoles faced since the late nineteenth century.

Spitzer describes those problems as "a crisis of cultural self-confidence."[13] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, increasing British racism gave many Creoles a sense that their British patrons, those that had brought many of their ancestors to Sierra Leone in the first place, had rejected them. This led to critical introspection into the

[11] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 9, 1936, p. 5.
[12] S.K.B. Asante, Pan-African Protest: West-Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941 (London: Longman, 1977): pp. 78-79.
[13] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 3.

Creole culture, which included doubts about the infallibility of a European example that, up until that point, Creoles accepted as the incontestable standard to which Africans should aspire. For many Creoles, Europeanization ceased to be the standard by which they judged status and some began seeking out parts of their African heritage that could supplement those losses. Those searches resulted in groups that celebrated the Creoles' African history, the two most prominent movements being the Dress Reform Society and a trend to change their European names into African ones. Dress societies were designed to help throw off the "Religion of the Frock Coat and Tall Hat"[14] and improve colonial subjects' cultural identity through a physical manifestation of their heritage. Renaming movements tried to restore Africanness in another outward, everyday manifestation. William J. Davis, upon researching his family's history, renamed himself Orishatukeh Faduma, after a Yoruba divinity, and many Creoles followed his example. But these attempts at somewhat cosmetic cultural change failed to address the more practical aspect of the Creole crisis.

Creoles held a growing fear since the late nineteenth century that they were dying out as a people due to a lack of cultural vitality.[15] The power structure in Sierra Leone did not allow for any control over the country by the Creoles and only reinforced a popular feeling that they had no say in their future. While some Creoles made inroads to the up-country looking for business or to establish church missions, the Colony remained the source and fortress of Creoledom. But immigrants from the lands surrounding the Colony[16] to Freetown steadily penetrated Creole culture and brought with it their own, weakening Creole strength in the Colony. In 1896, the British created the Protectorate,

[14] Ibid., p. 117
[15] Ibid., p. 109.
[16] These areas are often referred to as "up-country" within the historiography and this paper.

which comprised the rest of Sierra Leone outside of the Colony, partially at the behest of Creole businessmen who wanted more control over up-country markets. The Protectorate dwarfed the Colony, accounting for more than 95% of Sierra Leone's square area. The Hut Tax War of 1898 broke out when the chiefs perceived a British attempt at subverting their control over their own lands. The war produced many brutal deaths for up-country Creoles in a very short period of time and showed them that the Colony was more or less at the mercy of the Protectorate natives.[17] During this entire period, census information revealed to the Creoles that the Colony was increasingly less their stronghold, with figures listing the native population of the Colony in 1901 as 50% higher than that of 1881 and nearly equal to the Creole population.[18] Creoles wanted a unified Protectorate and Colony because it provided a lot of opportunities for economic expansion. But they could not deny that the creation of a unified and stable Sierra Leone that included both the Protectorate and the Colony required the natives', especially the chiefs', cooperation. The Hut Tax War revealed that any British or Creole mistakes in the political process towards that end could result in the Colony being overrun.

Essentially, the crisis outlined by Spitzer describes the Creoles' steady realization that they were floating between a racist Britain, increasingly uninterested in its own civilizing mission, and a looming native population that could, at any moment, turn on the Creoles as members of a colonial scheme. The Protectorate chiefs were very defensive of their position and they often viewed British rulings and Creole expansion as

[17] For the purposes of this work, "native" is understood to refer to the non-Creole Africans that either lived in the Protectorate or immigrated from those lands into Creole cities and villages while maintaining their traditional identity.

[18] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 225. He cites Robert Rene Kuczynski's Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire (London, 1948). By 1911, the non-Creole population would rise by another third while the Creole population actually dropped.

attempts at subversion. This was a strong and, in some ways, dangerous manifestation of an overarching problem that Creoles faced since the beginning of the Sierra Leonean Colony: How were the Creoles supposed to culturally define themselves between the British, who they admired and to whom they were so greatly indebted, and the unavoidable natives, with whom they were increasingly becoming kin and who often returned their own suspicions concerning control over the future of the country?

The Creoles' idea of their relationship with the natives was founded on the civilizing mission. Normally a European rationale for colonial domination, the ideology tried to justify the colonial project to the colonizers and the colonized by saying that the act of colonization, though difficult and restrictive, was necessary in order for the colonized to be relieved of despotism and ignorance in favour of quickened civilizational progress.[19]

British philanthropists saw an opportunity to destroy the slave trade through a less racially charged civilizational method which made use of Westernized blacks in Sierra Leone.[20] London Blacks, former American slaves who migrated to England with British soldiers after the American Revolution, were the first colonizers in 1787. The Nova Scotian Blacks, freed American slaves that had only gone with the British so far as Nova Scotia, arrived five years later. The idea behind the Sierra Leonean experiment was that the Westernized blacks could function as better conduits of the British imperial civilizing mission than any white man ever could. To a certain extent, it worked. After the British outlawed the slave trade, the Royal Navy began commandeering slave ships. When they

[19] Michael Adas, "Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology," Journal of World History 15, 1 (March, 2004): p. 31.
[20] Nemata Amelia Blyden, "'Back to Africa': The Migration of New World Blacks to Sierra Leone and Liberia," OAH Magazine of History 18, 3 The Atlantic World (April, 2004): p. 23.

found them in West African waters, very often they brought the rescued occupants to Freetown. These people, commonly called the Liberated Africans, had little other choice, considering their destitution, than to assimilate into the Western society. Many of them embraced the opportunity, their families growing from literally nothing into prominent members of the colonial community within a generation. The combination of the Westernized blacks and the liberated Africans created a Creole love of the British, bringing together the Westernized blacks' loyalty to the Empire and belief in its mission with the liberated Africans' gratitude to the British for their rescue from slavery. That love of the British led to attempts at and success in imitating the British, which in turn led to a notion of superiority amongst the new Creole society vis a vis the natives.

The notion of superiority was a fundamental part of the perceived purpose of their return to Africa. Compounding that sense of difference was a suspicion of those outside the Colony.[21] Native violence loomed over the Creoles who could remember that the natives burnt the London Blacks' colony to the ground in November, 1789. The 1898 Hut Tax War dug a definitive chasm in Creole-native relations, still visible in the Rambler's column twenty years later. At the very least, it showed the Creoles that they could not effectively control the natives, at least not without British help.

But there were many black voices, including Creole ones, suggesting that the Creoles and the natives belonged together. Spitzer calls Edward Wilmot Blyden "one of [the Creoles'] primary intellectual influences"[22] and he was easily the most influential of the Rambler's intellectual forebears, especially at a rhetorical level. Blyden said that the "regeneration" of the continent required the former exiles to harvest whatever inspiration

[21] Christopher Fyfe, "1787-1887-1987: Reflections on a Sierra Leone Bicentenary," Africa 57, 4 (1987): p. 414.
[22] Spitzer, The Creoles, p. 111.

they could from their experience with the whites so as to bring back to all Africans some ideas about how to move towards a bright new future.[23] While Blyden did not hold steady for the rest of his career in that idea, it certainly resonated with the Rambler. J. E. Casely-Hayford a popular West African intellectual and one of the founders of the NCBWA, wanted to see those culturally located between Britain and Africa make efforts to return to some African native institutions since African language and culture were part of what was needed for the formation of a "viable civilization."[24] Orishatukeh Faduma, a respected member of the Creole Christian community, said that Creoles needed to pay more attention to the natives in order to master the "A B Cs" of civilization necessary for future industrial Sierra Leonean progress.[25] Yekutiel Gershoni lists Faduma as one of "the major spokesmen" for the African-American avant-garde approach to the African future, which held that the conservative native African leaders were insufficiently prepared to lead Africa into the future, and instead required well trained African-American leaders in order to progress.[26] While none of these voices or others like them succeeded in convincing the entirety of Creoledom to reconsider its African heritage, they certainly heavily influenced the discourse. The history of violence between the natives and the Creoles certainly pushed the two bodies apart, but in the generation before the Rambler's emergence, these men and others like them sought ways to close the gap.

As for the British, their relationship with the Creoles was based upon an assumed

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[23] Peter Boele van Hensbroek, Political Discourses in African Thought: 1860 to Present (London: Praeger, 1999): p. 43.
[24] Kwadwo Osei-Nyame, "Pan-Africanist Ideology and the African Historical Novel of Self-Discovery: the Examples of Kobina Sekyi and J.E. Casely Hayford," Journal of African Studies 12, 2 (June, 1999): pp. 143, 146-147.
[25] Orishatukeh Faduma, reported by T.J.V. Macaulay"Industrial Education", SLWN, 22 August, 1908, p. 2.
[26] Yekutiel Gershoni, Africans on African-Americans; the Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth, (New York: New York University Press, 1997): p. 60.

intrinsic British superiority which first enabled British philanthropy, then patronage, and finally racism. Spitzer claims that part of the reason why the British wanted the London blacks sent back to Africa was that, in light of the abolition of slavery on British soil, they had become a "social blemish," a reminder of the history of civilized Britain's former involvement in slavery.[27] Nemata Blyden writes that "a large portion" of Britons considered them "vagrants" and "undesirables" and Granville Sharp's project to found Sierra Leone offered a chance to be rid of them.[28] But Creoles considered themselves an African people of British birth[29] and grew to consider themselves "Black English," the inevitable achievement of the civilizing mission in Africa.[30] Still, significant divisions and confrontations between the Creoles and the British occurred. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a Sierra Leonean press which openly and often fiercely criticized a colonial government perceived to be failing in its duties to the Creoles, often risking official retaliation.[31] Late nineteenth century racism manifested itself in colour bars in professional fields and the removal of Creoles from important jobs within the colonial bureaucracy, which suggested to them not only a racial inferiority, but also that they were not as important to the civilizing mission as they had previously understood themselves to be.

So on the one hand, the Creoles had to reconcile their desire to feel like they belonged in Africa with a relationship with the natives marked by a history of violence and suspicion. And on the other, they had to reconcile their belief in a civilizing mission

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[27] Spitzer, The Creoles, p. 9.
[28] Blyden, "Back to Africa," p. 23.
[29] Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962): p. 495.
[30] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 40.
[31] Fred I. A. Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: the West African Example," Journal of African History 9, 2 (1968): p. 279. These threats only went so far as censorship, but Omu states that the only thing that prevented censorship was the British administrators' awareness that Creoles would consider such actions a sign of weakness on the part of the colonial government.

that promised that they would one day be equal to the British with a British imperial behaviour that had evolved from philanthropy to racism. This was the problem at the core of Creoledom. Creoles wanted to be both Africans and Englishmen at the same time, but were increasingly rejected by both sides. But the Rambler, emerging in 1913, well after the onset of the crisis, held on to both ideas - of native-Creole cooperation and British altruism - well into the thirties. How and why did this Creole remain trapped between these ideas?

The purpose of this work is to examine the Rambler's own struggle within a turbulent Sierra Leonean debate over identity. To that end, it makes use of Cohen's proposed spectrum of ethnic position. On one end there are the British, on the other the Africans, and the Creoles' identity lies somewhere in the middle.[32] Through changes in everyday ceremonies, Cohen explores the Creoles' gradual incorporation of native traditions into their culture.[33] While Cohen focuses more on the twentieth century, his idea can be used to track cultural changes in Sierra Leonean society that resulted from the increasing struggle between Creole and native cultures that occurred over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The cultural struggle splintered the Creole position on the spectrum. Many felt, as they had historically, that they should remain close to the British, but others thought that their proper cultural position lay closer to the natives. African thinkers, especially Blyden, steadily redefined the African race from an African perspective in a discourse that P. B. van Hensbroek claims revolved around "African regeneration." This discourse held that a European civilizing mission was

[32] Abner Cohen, The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981): p. 131.
[33] Cohen, Politics of Elite Culture, pp. 60-83. He especially discusses the different manifestations of native traditions in Creole ceremonies concerning marriage, childbirth and naming, and funerals.

unnecessary and indeed ran counter to African progress and needed to be replaced with an African agenda that revolved around African uniqueness, self-consciousness and cultural self-assertion.[34]

While Cohen's work is a sociological examination of elites and political culture in Sierra Leone[35] and Spitzer's critics accuse him of leaning too far towards sociology while claiming to write history,[36] the tools that they provide are certainly useful to historians. Traditionally, historians have used a hierarchy to discuss the relationship between the British, Creoles and natives, with the British at the top and the natives at the bottom. Fyfe portrays Creoles obsessed with upward mobility, forming a cultural group based on meeting English standards.[37] Wyse focuses most strongly on elites in his work,[38] acknowledging at one point that the major works of Sierra Leonean history have left the "more humble" members of Creole society under-examined.[39] The hierarchy suggests three stacked categories, British, Creole and native, whose boundaries are determined in a top-down fashion. The historians who make use of that model do not define when exactly a person moves up or down to a new level or how. The crisis Spitzer refers to emphasizes the fracturing of the cultural boundaries between the Creoles and the natives. It further suggests that a hierarchical categorization of the peoples of Sierra Leone is no longer fitting from the late nineteenth century onward because individuals within Creoledom

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[34] Van Hensbroek, Political Discourses p. 46.
[35] Christopher Clapham, review of The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society by Abner Cohen, African Affairs, 81, 323 (April, 1982): pp. 282-283.
[36] Christopher Fyfe, "The Sierra Leone Creoles," review of The Creoles of Sierra Leone, by Leo Spitzer, Journal of African History 17, 2 (1976): pp. 315-317. Also, see John D. Hargreaves review in International Journal of African Historical Studies 8, 3 (1975): pp. 532-533.
[37] Christopher Fyfe, "1787," p. 418.
[38] See Wyse's H.C.Bankole-Bright and "The Dissolution of Freetown City Council in 1926: A Negative Example of Political Apprenticeship in Colonial Sierra Leone," Africa 57, 4 (1987): pp. 422-438.
[39] Akintola Wyse, The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History (Freetown: W.D. Okrafo-Smart and Co., 1989): p. viii. He lists Fyfe, John Hargreaves, Arthur Porter, John Peterson, Spitzer, Martin Kilson, Christopher Clapham and Ayodele Langley, all of whom, he claims, have neglected the rank-and-file Creoles in favour of the "stereotype" of the elite-centered group.

began to reconsider the value of native culture in an effort to reassert their Africanness. Cohen's spectrum, thus, becomes much more useful because it culturally locates the Creoles somewhere between the British and the native Sierra Leoneans without the rigid rungs and implied upward pressure of a hierarchy. It instead presents a plane of free movement. Creoledom becomes a field along that plane allowing for a historiographical discussion that goes beyond the traditional stacked categories into a realm of cultural pressure, individual struggle, and movement. Creoledom should thus be seen as a zone of contention, its boundaries up for debate at an individual level. That spectrum can then be used to position any number of Creole individuals somewhere between the English and Africans and further to track their positions over time. The importance of it, in the end, is that it should better capture any Creole's struggle with his or her positioning on the spectrum and what causes that to change. For the purposes of this work, the Creole search for identity in this contended terrain shall be referred to as the Creole problematic. Through the Rambler we can explore one Creole's struggle with that problematic. What we can then see is how the pressures exerted in the crisis described by Spitzer pushed him alternately towards and away from British and native ideals. What is important here is properly appreciating the Rambler's struggle with those pressures over the course of his career and how he finally differenciated between Briton and Creole and Creole and native.

Chapter 2 tracks the trajectory of the Rambler's conception of the socio-political landscape in Sierra Leone within the Creole problematic, focusing on the dynamic identity boundaries within Sierra Leone. The Rambler's descriptions of the Creoles, the British, and the natives and his conceptions of the proper interplay between them are, of

course, integral to this work.

Chapters 3 and 4 explore two important manifestations of his shifts along the spectrum in two separate cases. The third chapter focuses on the Rambler's conception of agricultural development in Sierra Leone before 1919 and how he tried to encourage it. He held a lingering hope in the developmental agenda of the British civilizing mission, but also a belief that Sierra Leone's future rested on a societal turning to the soil, something Blyden thought was a proper representation of Africanness. The Rambler's recommendations and goals for a Sierra Leonean agricultural movement never were realized and his efforts to prevent that failure help to outline what he thought Creoles should harvest from British industry and existing native agricultural industry in order to create some kind of functional synthesis.

The fourth chapter focuses on his reaction to the Ethiopian crisis in the 1930s. The Rambler reacted to the news of Italy's violation of the last free African Empire by appealing to ideal images of both a justice-loving West and an innocent Ethiopia. But the Rambler's understanding of the realpolitik within the League of Nations and the British Cabinet put him on a path to a deep disillusionment with the West. The crisis ultimately revealed to the Rambler a completely dysfunctional relationship between the West and Africa which shattered his belief in the altruism of the British civilizing mission. But the Rambler reacted to the crisis by appropriating the moral language of the British rather than dismissing it. The crisis pushed the Rambler to take the British out of the civilizing mission and make the mission a standard that Creoles could define and control, one applicable to all Sierra Leoneans. Chapter three goes into considerably more detail in terms of the British context than the previous two chapters. However, the first two

chapters deal much more with a silent British. The second chapter deals with a personal struggle to define a subjective identity based upon the civilizing mission. The third chapter speaks of the Rambler assuming altruistic British intentions which turned out to be false. The fourth chapter deals with his reaction to clear British failures. His attention to and belief in leaders like David Lloyd George suggests that he was at least aware of the British political realities and it is because of that awareness that chapter three pays greater attention to British specifics.

It is not the purpose of this work to discover the Rambler's true identity, but some discussion of what we do know about him is relevant. The Rambler adeptly guarded his personal information. He hinted early on that he was a single male[40] and never betrayed any change to that status. He never explained his decade-long absence, opening his returning column only with a diplomatic apology to his "enemies."[41] He never let on about a job or anything else that could cause him to disappear for months at a time, as was the case during both periods. Hopes of deducing any specifics fail when thrown against his publishing statistics. His first period was his most productive: between March 1913 and July 1919, he wrote a hundred and twenty-one columns for the *SLWN*, a quarter of which he wrote in his first nine months. This six year period was a time of otherwise solid production broken up by three prolonged absences of seven months or more, one of which he attributed to a spat with the editor, and several shorter ones, running no longer than two months at a time.[42] Long absences did not characterize his second period of production. Instead, there were much shorter and more frequent silences. His columns

[40] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 14, 1913, p. 10.
[41] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 20, 1929, p. 9.
[42] In the October 5, 1918, column (p. 5), he blames a two month absence on the influenza outbreak. Outside of the fight with the editor, this is the only absence that receives any real explanation for the rest of his publishing career.

came less reliably during that time, with fewer uninterrupted lengths of weekly publication: for example, he averaged just under one column a month between May 1930 and December 1931. His absences across both periods do not fall into any pattern which might suggest some sort of seasonal occupation, although he always published little between the end of October and the beginning of February. In any case, his writings suggest little more than that the Rambler was a well-educated, Christian, Creole male, most likely in his twenties when he began publishing. Little else can be assumed about his person otherwise.

However, some assumptions about the institution of the Rambler should be discussed before going any further. This work assumes that the Rambler was one person and not a succession of writers for three reasons. First, the Rambler's style, points of discussion, and motivations for writing seem fairly consistent throughout his career despite the evolution of his political position between the start and finish. Secondly, that someone other than the progenitor of the institution of the Rambler would appropriate it, regenerate it, or even accept it is less likely given Fred Omu's picture of the West African press.[43] He suggests that consumers of West African newsprint granted greater prestige to harsh critics of the government. The Rambler's criticisms were not very strong during the first period of his writings, only truly gaining some teeth at the Ethiopian crisis. The institution of the Rambler, given its normally conciliatory tone, was not much worth appropriating for any commentator looking to gain any kind of standing as a competent critic of the government amongst readers. Thirdly, Carolyn Bledsoe's work on education in Sierra Leone reveals an interesting angle from which to view pseudonymous

[43] Fred I.A. Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: the West African Example," Journal of African History 9, 2 (1968): p. 280.

contributions to the Sierra Leonean press. Bledsoe points out that the Mende natives of Sierra Leone, a large and heavily secretive society, viewed information as a commodity and secrets as a source of power, which complicated the educational system at the point where Western and Mende conceptions of the nature and use of knowledge met.[44] Historians have yet to explore the extent to which such an idea could have penetrated the Sierra Leonean press, but the prevalence of *nom de guerre* writers in West African newspapers along with Bledsoe's observation about secrets-as-power suggest that appropriating someone else's pseudonym would provide less prestige than the creation of a brand new institution for a burgeoning critic of the colonial apparatus.

[44] Caroline Bledsoe, "The Cultural Transformation of Western Education in Sierra Leone," Africa 62, 2 (1992): p. 191.

Chapter 2
"My Life's Work"

This chapter traces the changes in the Rambler's conceptualization of identities within Sierra Leone. The Rambler spoke often of his ideas about identity and attempted to use them as a rallying point for some larger ideas. His consistency from one article or period to the next was not exemplary, but some of his main arguments stayed more or less the same. The Rambler held that Sierra Leonean progress and the development of a national identity, inclusive to both natives and Creoles, that reconciled the British and African histories of its people, were interchangeable in terms of cause and effect. Progress brought about the opportunity and possibly the need to develop an overarching identity, while a commonly accessible identity created the potential for greater involvement in development.

Cohen rightly observes that community has to be defined almost from one individual's conception to the next.[45] According to him, communities are defined at the personal level using physical, linguistic, religious, and racial boundaries as a basis upon which definition takes place, and a community consciousness, important both for and within any use of the media, can only be generated by members in interaction. Some might take issue with the bluntness of Cohen's reduction of the community to a series of boundaries, since it would require intensive exploration of the evolution of individual positions. For instance, Harneit-Sievers inverts Cohen's conceptual structure, so that the

[45] A.P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (Chichester, Eng.: Ellis Horwood Ltd, 1985): p. 13. The key point in Cohen's book relevant to this work is the process of locating the concept of community on a spectrum of conceptualization between a common 'oratorical abstraction' and a level of consciousness. Cohen otherwise dwells mostly on symbols as the building blocks of a community consciousness. At issue here is the manipulation of a community consciousness through dynamic oratorical abstractions.

collective consciousness is what determines the boundaries.[46] But Cohen's placement of differentiation before the realization of similarity is more applicable in this instance especially given the Rambler's use of the other, in this case, the British and the natives, to define the Sierra Leonean self.

The Rambler inherited a discourse on identities that had, in many ways, already been contended without a distinct conclusion. The figure within that discourse from whom he inherited the most was Edward Blyden. Blyden presented an Afrocentric civilizing mission in which the burden of civilization fell to the "exiled brethren," meaning the ex-American slaves, instead of the whites. It was the exiles' responsibility to bring the indigenous Africans out of "stagnant barbarism."[47] While the Rambler turned instead to the British as the proper civilizers, the "civilized-primitive dichotomy" Blyden employed was definitely visible throughout the Rambler's discussions of the Creoles and natives. Also detectable within "Rambling Talks" was Blyden's belief in the distinct cultural characteristics of each race. The Rambler often referred to the native peasants using Blyden's ideas about the innate spirituality, patience, strength and goodwill of Africans.[48] Also, at times throughout his career, the Rambler made statements that very closely mirrored some of Blyden's platitudes. For instance, both Blyden and the Rambler would try to convince their audience to "be themselves" in relation to both the whites and the natives.

The Rambler gave the Creoles special treatment because of their position between a Western heritage and Africanness. But his definition of cultural categories was often

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[46] Axel Harneit-Sievers, Constructions of Belonging (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006): p. 5.
[47] Van Hensbroek, Political Discourses , p. 45.
[48] M. Yu. Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality,"African Affairs, 73, 292 (July 1974): p. 280.

inconsistent. He left the boundaries between a Sierra Leonean identity and a Creole identity poorly defined. Sometimes he used "Sierra Leonean" to denote all people within the country, especially when discussing Sierra Leone's place within the Empire or within Africa. In others, he used it to imply that Creoles, by virtue of their better appreciation of the country and the civilizational progression it followed, better understood patriotism than the natives did.

In all cases, he wanted identity to motivate progress. His Sierra Leone included Creoles and natives, Christians and Muslims, women, youth, children, workers, farmers, merchants, clerks, teachers, students, and all sorts of other demographic categories and occupations. It was from these groups that he expected a solid national identity to emerge, and he tried to imply that all of their separate struggles with white employers, self-serving chiefs, British administrators, or other agents against unity were part of the greater struggle of the Creole problematic and beyond that the evolution of the Sierra Leonean nation. In every case, he thought they all contributed to some kind of political progress by asserting themselves against a controlling white superiority or a chiefly intransigence. Dynamic socio-political circumstances often caused him to change the conceptualization of his proposed national identity. For example, he shifted towards the English at the outbreak of the First World War because of his belief in the Empire. The Abyssinian Crisis, however, drove him away from them because he perceived a grand moral failure on their part. A more subtle and longstanding issue he never explicitly addressed, but that was visible nonetheless, was whether or not the Sierra Leoneans could form their own national identity proactively or if it was instead a reactive process. It is against the backdrop of the Creole problematic that the Rambler's struggle with identity

formation should be understood. This chapter discusses how the interactions between the British, the natives, and the Creoles fit into the Rambler's process of identity formation in order to determine whether or not he had clear and concise conceptions of the separate identities within the Creole problematic.

2.1 Communal Identity

In order to portray a cohesive Sierra Leonean identity, the Rambler had to address a very complex historical environment for identity formation. Sierra Leonean identities were malleable. Outside of Freetown, tribal identity could mean very little, even on an individual level, with intense diversity, large chiefdoms and intermarrying rendering one's dominant identity difficult to trace, much less maintain.[49] Furthermore, some native interpretations of identity and nation, which translated nations into networks of blood ties and even friendship, did not mesh well with traditional Western conceptions.[50] Fyfe's description of Freetown society in the early nineteenth century paints a picture of an old-guard Creole society that valued "hard work, self-respect, and individual achievement and a sense of personal rather than corporate responsibility."[51] Creoles held a much higher standard of living than natives in both the Protectorate and the Colony, which exacerbated the divisions between them and the natives.[52] Only sporadic incidents of

[49] Barbara E. Harrell-Bond, Allen M. Howard, and David E. Skinner, Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801-1976) (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1978): p. 192.
[50] Allen M. Howard, "Re-Marking on the Past: Spatial Structures and Dynamics in the Sierra Leone-Guinea Plain, 1860-1920s," in Howard and Richard M. Shains (eds.) The Spatial Factor in African History: the Relationship of the Social Material and Perceptual, (Boston: Brill, 2005): p. 294.
[51] Christopher Fyfe, "The Foundation of Freetown," in C. Fyfe and Eldred Jones' (eds.) Freetown: A Symposium (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press, 1968): pp. 4-5.
[52] Walter Barrows, Grassroots Politics in an African State (New York: African Publishing Co., 1976): p. 17.

unity occurred until I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, the charismatic voice of the WAYL, provided Sierra Leoneans with a political focal point, the rejection of the colonial political structure.[53] Freetown was the most fertile environment for defining the Sierra Leonean identity, as the point of dissemination for both goods and ideas[54] and it is there that identity boundaries were loose enough to be negotiable from one set of circumstances to another,[55] setting the stage for the crisis Spitzer describes. The Rambler did not proactively pursue solutions to cultural divisions within Sierra Leone. There were simply too many to solve. Instead he tried to make cultural labelling less divisive and he often appealed to a Sierra Leonean identity designed to appeal to both Creoles and natives in order to make his ideas as accessible as possible.

One of the clearest presentations of how he thought the identity problem could be managed came forward in May of 1918 when he contemplated the possible categorization of citizens in a census that he predicted would take place within a few years. He felt that the community should have taken the chance to give themselves a proper name noting that those within the Colony "vacillated" between Sierra Leonean and Creole as chosen labels.[56] He rejected the authorities' classification of Creoles as "descendants of liberated Africans" as "long winded, inadequate and degrading" and "cumbrously fallacious." He noted that the Nova Scotian and London blacks first used the term "Creole" and further that the natives used it to describe both the people within the Colony and any of their own tribesmen that migrated there. He admitted to using Creole as a cultural marker somewhat clumsily, failing to remember that the natives referred to anyone born in the Colony, of

[53] David Fashole Luke, "The Development of Modern Trade Unionism in Sierra Leone," International Journal of African Historical Studies 18, 3 (1985): p. 429.
[54] Barrows, Grassroots, p. 3.
[55] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 13.
[56] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 25, 1918, p. 8.

both settler and native decent, as Creoles. Those with native parents born in the Colony, he said, felt "no little pride" about being called a Creole. But he still felt that it was necessary to distinguish between Sierra Leoneans from the Colony and those from the Protectorate. He refused to go so far as to label one educated and the other uneducated because he believed that the increasing number of educated natives would render such a classification meaningless. Instead, he settled on a simple modifier in the "Creole Sierra Leonean" or "Foulah Sierra Leonean" style. He cited the example of the Irish American or the English Britisher, saying that "Every country on earth is made up of several tribes but they all have one general name which binds them together. Why shouldn't we? rather, why, when already owning one, shouldn't we Sierra Leoneans use it and be proud of it?" The article assumed an overarching national identity within the country but did not say anything about what it meant to be a Sierra Leonean. He did not specify how cultural and political conflicts between natives and Creoles would be resolved.

Thirteen years later, after a colonial census in 1931 identified the "Sierra Leonean Nation," the Rambler called for a nationwide Thanksgiving Service to celebrate the occasion. He believed his ideas about the inevitability of nationhood had been vindicated.[57] Absent, though, from his celebration was any discussion of the importance of the differentiation between the Colony and Protectorate within a recognized Sierra Leonean nation. It focused simply on progress towards nationhood, ignoring for the moment, at least, the ethnic boundaries within Sierra Leone. A friend later recommended that the term "Colony-born" be used instead because Creole was too "reminiscent of slave days" and that Colony-born was better able to differentiate "the settler descendants from the aboriginals." The Rambler countered that the term Creole had little to do with

[57] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 11, 1931, p. 9.

slavery and repeated his 1918 idea for using tribe as a modifier. He felt that Colony-born gave "no information of [someone's] tribal connection, which is what I intend to indicate when I write of Temne, Mende, *or Creole* – all hundred per cent Sierra Leoneans, but of different tribes."[58]

But he did not properly maintain the inclusive definition. He took the opportunity presented by a Freetown by-election late in 1937 to make some declarations about the evolution of the political behaviour of Sierra Leonean "laymen" that focused on voters within the Colony. He held up the voters as true representatives of Sierra Leonean progress. Their "awakening," he said, was evidence that the people understood the true value of representative government. But when he called for national electoral reforms based on that awakening, his ideas showed a bias towards the Colony. He called for the expansion of the Colony's influence on the Legislative Council, from three to six seats, which would have granted the Colony more power in the council than the Protectorate, which was represented by three chiefs. Those reforms, he claimed, would contribute to the betterment of the Sierra Leonean condition. He spoke exclusively of politics within the Colony as the source of "Sierra Leonean" progress and did not mention what, if any, progress could ever emerge from the Protectorate.[59]

In June of 1938, he addressed the emergence of the Sierra Leone Youth League, the Sierra Leonean wing of Wallace-Johnson's West African Youth League, that heavily criticized the British colonial leaders and called for greater political cohesion amongst Sierra Leoneans. He hoped that the Youth League would become the new face of Sierra Leonean populism and wrest control of Sierra Leone's political relationship with Britain

[58] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 9, 1935, p. 9, emphasis mine.
[59] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 30, 1937, pp. 8-9.

from the elite, its traditional owners. The Youth League was effectively unifying and politically refreshing. By denouncing the Ethiopian invasion and articulating a black rejection of white diplomatic apathy and incompetence the Youth League took up the position the Rambler had wanted the Sierra Leonean public to take since the beginning of the Italian campaign.[60] For him, the League overrode the problems presented in the search for a Creole identity by aiming for a larger Sierra Leonean one. He presented the Youth League as a "wave of consciousness" that had swept over Sierra Leone, "affecting old and young alike." He dismissed some popular scepticism about the relevance of the Youth League that said it enjoyed success mostly because of its novelty. He said that the staying power of the Youth League was stronger than previous similarly-oriented, short-lived movements because it represented a "missionary campaign." Even without Wallace-Johnson, he thought, the movement could be kept alive by the membership. Aside from its appeal over the crisis, the Youth League also courted Sierra Leoneans frustrated with unmet political, economic and social expectations. Generated by newly discovered mineral wealth and the increasing strategic importance of Freetown, these were amplified by increasing costs of living.[61] The Rambler saw support for the Youth League coming from members of the clergy, both Christian and Muslim, political representatives from both the Protectorate and the Colony, and "Sierra Leone Womanhood," who the Rambler estimated provided the strongest support to its agenda. The diverse supporters, representative of a cross-section of Sierra Leoneans, prompted the Rambler to claim that Downing Street could not afford to ignore the Youth League.[62]

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[60] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 18, 1938, p. 9.
[61] Spitzer and Denzer, "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson", p. 569.
[62] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 29, 1939, p. 12.

He hoped that the League might give Sierra Leoneans a rallying point for forming a stronger community.

The Rambler's exercises in exploring the Sierra Leonean political identity were reactive and never took a leading role. Visible most strongly through his discussions of the census categorizations, his comments criticized the failures of some conceptual frameworks, which he felt implied too strong a difference between the peoples of Sierra Leone, or celebrated the emergence of others, which he thought were more inclusive within a greater Sierra Leonean identity. Also, his efforts at identity definition focused most strongly on the political aspects. Other aspects such as Creole and native commercial or religious identities went largely undefined. His comments on the census terminology showed a desire to make a Sierra Leonean identity as broad, flexible and overarching as possible, which would preclude much definition or exclusion. When the Youth League made a public appeal along the same lines, the Rambler supported it. In terms of the Creole problematic, the Rambler, by implying a Sierra Leonean inclusiveness, tried to advance the Creole search for a common ground. He wanted to expand and culturally dilute a political Sierra Leonean identity so that it could cover more space along the cultural spectrum. Distinct ethnic groups would then fall under its umbrella without requiring the sacrifice of either British or African heritage. He wanted natives to begin considering themselves Sierra Leoneans just as much as the Creoles did. Harmless, vague and inclusive to those traditionally outside the bounds of Creoledom, an overarching Sierra Leonean identity would serve to create a foundation for Creole and native unity by implying a basic commonality. Creoledom would stand a much better chance of surviving in the face of lingering fears that the Creole culture's days were

numbered if the Rambler could convince the natives and Creoles that they were distinct, but equal, parts of a greater Sierra Leonean whole rather than ultimately different peoples struggling with each other for position under the British.

2.2 The Empire's White Burden

Institutional racism, growing since the mid-nineteenth century, limited Creoles' roles within the government and reserved the best positions for white men. The Creole community, for the most part, refused to believe that white attitudes discredited the supposedly civilizing colonial system as an institution founded on racist exploitation.[63] Those Creoles who did act against racism tended to do so from their armchairs, sipping tea and writing protest letters, holding the concept of "barricade fighting" beneath them.[64] Whites saw the Creoles as a hybrid people, caught between being African and English and still in need of a paternal guiding hand.[65] Important figures in West African discourse, especially Blyden, had already begun appropriating the process of setting the ideal civilizational trajectory for Africa[66] by the time the Rambler emerged. While "Rambling Talks" agreed that an African future was for Africans to determine, where did he leave the whites? The Rambler did not think that the whites were going to leave soon.

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[63] Leo Spitzer, "The Mosquito and Segregation in Sierra Leone," Canadian Journal of African Studies 2, 1 (1968): p. 50.
[64] Leo Spitzer, "The Sierra Leone Creoles, 1870-1900" in Phillip Curtin's, ed., Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1972): p. 108.
[65] Christopher Fyfe, "1787-1887-1987," p. 416.
[66] Edward W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967). On p. 81, in "Liberal Education for Africans," he discusses the need to disregard Eurocentric education. Later, on p. 143, in "Echoes From America," he attacks the legitimacy of white advice or dictates, in any concern, to Africans. On p. 280, in "Africa and the Africans," he declares that subjugation cannot guarantee progress for Africa.

How then did he understand the whites' role in Sierra Leonean progress and when and how did his views change?

The *SLWN* presented the racism that the Rambler had to counteract. But the *SLWN* did not simply react to episodes of racism in the white press. It instead took a more affirmative stance, but failed to function as an assertive agent of civilization because it could not throw off British standards in favour of African ones. The editor claimed that Sierra Leoneans needed to be "intensely self-conscious" of their race.

> We need to think of ourselves as a body by ourselves; we need to believe that it is not for nothing that while having two eyes and two ears like other people we are nevertheless *black* and not white; we are *black* and not red.[67]

But race was not the overarching determinant of a national consciousness in light of cultural circumstances. A Sierra Leonean national identity could "assimilate" some English characteristics without risking that which would make it a genuine "African" identity. But that which was "essential" to an African identity remained undefined.

> It is the essential things which our self-consciousness should not be inclined to part with. The essential things African we are bound to keep, and all those things, those European characteristics which would have a consolidating effect upon our own character, we, while calling ourselves an African Nation *must* assimilate: and while we are doing this, only ordinary folks of the white race would consider us fit subjects for ridicule and ill-treatment.[68]

Here was an interesting conceptualization of the politics of a Sierra Leonean identity. The editor painted the lower class English as most likely to disapprove of the search within Africa for a national identity amongst the Sierra Leoneans, an opinion that the Rambler did not share for most of his career, and implied that Sierra Leoneans still had to measure up somehow to the English. Furthermore, the article made no mention of what it meant to be African. Africanness seemed to mean that which was not English, but was of use to

[67] "On Patriotism," SLWN, March 21, 1914, p. 8, emphasis in original.
[68] Ibid., emphasis in original.

the creation of a national identity, instead of any positive ideas, like language or culture. The author minimized the presence of African sources of identity, citing only "the Agoogoo dance" and dress styles, although he did say that they were essential.[69]

The Rambler thought popular white racist opinions would only prove to be detrimental to whites because blacks stood to gain from white failures. In April of 1913 he said that Sierra Leoneans "ought to be thankful for one thing;"

> This unreasoning dislike, which is at present expressing itself in acts of discrimination against us, helps to bring us closer together. For instance, since the snubbing we got at a Review parade on the Recreation Ground the other time – when the invitees were grouped on the segregation principle – since then Sierra Leoneans have become more united. The rich have shown more sympathy for the poor. The "England-gone" has laid aside his ridiculous assumption and now associates freely with his "local" brother. Every subsequent act of discrimination has only served to strengthen his bond of sympathy.[70]

He also felt that facing racist attitudes would make Africans more sceptical of whites in the future. He predicted that if racism intensified, Africans would grow doubtful of white ambitions and suspicious of any projected white sincerity, concluding that "It is very strange how an African could be happy in [the white man's company]."[71] It was through that racial other that the Rambler established some of the boundaries of a Sierra Leonean identity, claiming that anglophilia could not define Sierra Leonean culture. But the Rambler refused to address his paradoxical conception of the connection between Britain and the rest of the Empire. He believed strongly in the Empire as a human accomplishment and appealed to a "British sense of fairplay" in the face of bald racism.[72]

But at the Empire's helm he saw the English, increasingly racist and failing to live up to their own supposed standards. He responded by trying to focus black attention on

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[69] Ibid.
[70] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 19, 1913, p. 6.
[71] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 4, 1913, p. 6.
[72] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 22, 1916, p. 4.

the civilizing mission as a non-racial civilizational progression, not as a British test. Doing so allowed blacks to appropriate the mission, but also allowed for whites to make failures of their own. The whites' reinforcement of otherness, he claimed, benefited the Sierra Leonean identity.

> Anything to make the Sierra Leone Creole know and appreciate the fact that he is an African and not a European, a Negro and not a white man; anything to make him proud of being what God intended him to be instead of becoming the pitiful ape that he unfortunately is, will always command the gratitude of the Sierra Leone patriot.[73]

His attitude focused on the plight of the Creoles within the British Empire and how best to overcome mental oppression. He was careful not to attribute any kind of inherent villainy to the white man, opting instead to point to his irrationality. He suggested instead that they had grown steadily out of touch with their own ideals. According to him, Britain was "*the* champion of Liberty, Truth and Justice"[74] and racism that made it into the public sphere could not possibly have properly represented Britain.[75]

Similar to Blyden's position in the late nineteenth century which held that Africa could adopt many Western cultural elements while remaining culturally distinct,[76] the Rambler saw white morality as a model that held some maxims worth assimilating into a Creole identity, but others that had to be discarded. For instance, he believed that Creoles had to guard their heritage against imitating the British. Early in his career, he told his countrymen to "be self-conscious, self-reliant, have backbone," specifically addressing their tendency towards idealizing or imitating the English.[77] A month later, he

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[73] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 31, 1917, p. 8.
[74] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 22, 1916, p. 8, emphasis in original.
[75] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 9, 1917, p. 8.
[76] Hollis R. Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967): p. 209.
[77] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 22, 1913, p. 6.

commented on the popularity of certain British-inspired trends amongst the Creole population;

> a good many of us Sierra Leoneans are trying every day of our lives to make impossible things of ourselves, to wit, *whitemen*. This somewhat pathetic aspiration can be detected in the different crazes which from time to time get into vogue in this country.

Rambler objected to the trends because "the white man takes every bit of Africa for a bush, and every Sierra Leonean who apes him in this undesirable style is simply helping to bushify his own country." However, in the same article, he declared that some aspects of English culture were worth emulating, such as proper manners, "gallantry to women," and the ability to mind one's own business.[78]

Creoles were, in many cases, trying to reconcile English racists in the colonial system with a supposed imperial morality,[79] the same one they thought had brought Granville Sharp and the original black settlers to Sierra Leone. The ability to separate that morality from actual English behaviour was indispensable to the Rambler's identity. To him, defining himself as a Creole or an African or a Sierra Leonean required that he establish and maintain a positive African self and that he distinguish between that identity and an English one. In his mind, some Sierra Leoneans became too English to serve any kind of progress. While discussing the use of local vernaculars in the educational process, Rambler said of those that insisted on English alone in the classroom "Your black 'Englishmen' and 'Englishwomen' – supercilious 'England-goners' and 'would-be England-goners' – are too hopelessly, helplessly de-Africanised to be of any real use to the country and the race."[80] After noting that another contributor had pointed out a

[78] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 26, 1913, p. 6, emphasis in original.
[79] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 50.
[80] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 31, 1917, p. 6.

common lack of awareness of black history of early Sierra Leone, the Rambler lamented that "We know such a dreadful lot about white people and their countries; but what a pitiful knowledge we possess of our own country and ourselves!"[81] According to him, educated Sierra Leoneans were in danger of "thinking white" because of a Western curriculum that presented whites as "models of perfection."[82] Elite emulation of white styles and behaviours reinforced his fear of excessive Europeanisation, present since the late nineteenth century among those Africans who wanted greater emphasis on the African heritage of Sierra Leone.

Many Creoles still believed they were English in all but colour,[83] and the Rambler saw that as a problem.[84] If we again consider the Creole problematic on a spectrum, the Rambler's early discussions of the British can be seen as trying to properly define the white end of the spectrum. Englishness was definitely white, but Britishness was not. His overall tone was loyal, but he tried to redefine Britishness from the point of view of a colonized people. The Rambler believed that proper Britons could not possibly be racist under their own civilizational rhetoric and further that British could not be synonymous with white. But his attempts were clumsy. His dismissal of the "England-goners" as detrimental to the construction of a proper Sierra Leonean identity needed further explanation of the difference between someone who admired English culture and someone who wanted to be white. How much emulation was too much? Obviously, some was allowed: British justice and fair play needed to be upheld by everyone involved in

[81] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 15, 1917, p. 8.
[82] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 28, 1913, p. 6.
[83] Christopher Fyfe, A History, p. 469.
[84] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 18, 1918, p. 6. In this article, the Rambler declares that Sierra Leoneans are divided by their separate positions on white civilization, one position being so admiring of it that it borders on "superstition."

the colonial project. But imitating whites did not equal acting British. The English were not perfect Britons in his eyes. He cited negrophobia as the source of white racism, a violation of British justice and fair play.[85] Whites, for the Rambler, were failing to properly perform their end of what he thought was the civilizing mission. The civilizing mission, thus, was not exclusive to the Africans: Whites needed to reform their own failings. The Empire was integral to progress for all the groups within it, including the whites. It provided the maxims for the proper development of all its nations, especially Sierra Leone. But whites needed to allow Sierra Leoneans to develop as they saw fit and to remember that whiteness was neither a measure of civilization nor a proper goal. In short, the Rambler wanted Sierra Leoneans to be proper British people, not Englishmen.

Upon his return from his decade-long absence, he quoted the late Reverend George Nicol, the first African appointed to the colonial chaplaincy of the Gambia, who felt that Europeans came to West Africa with one of two sets of ideas. The first group overestimated the level of West African education and civilization while the second group underestimated it. Reverend Nicol said Sierra Leone was

> neither a community which has reached the acme of European civilization and refinement, nor, on the other hand, a conglomeration of rude and untutored boors, huddled up together into one unshapely mass, but a race forming and not formed.[86]

Nicol also objected to English clergymen calling Sierra Leoneans "free slaves." Instead, Nicol said "We are not descendants of slaves, but of a freed people" and went on to say that, if not for the racial and national context, Sierra Leoneans would be easily comparable to Australians.[87] The next week, the Rambler quoted at length a piece

[85] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 28, 1913, p. 6; January 22, 1916, p. 4; July 7, 1917, p. 7.
[86] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 30, 1929, p. 9.
[87] Ibid.

published in 1890 by Mr. Robert Wade, former Head of the Prison Department in Sierra Leone. The selections Rambler made of Wade's writing dismissed as un-Christian the actions of many Europeans that portrayed Sierra Leone as "one huge, seething mass of the vilest wickedness and corruption" and pointed out that Sierra Leoneans carried out "the whole work of the Government," except for a few white department heads. The Rambler took satisfaction from the fact that a former Head of the Prison Department referred to Sierra Leoneans as "a kind, generous, grateful and hospitable people" who were "in every way – mentally, intellectually, and morally – equal at least to Europeans."[88] But the Rambler noted that Wade was exceptional for a British colonial official.

Creoles were well aware of British racism and had been since the mid-nineteenth century,[89] but the Rambler at times tried to prevent that from becoming a divisive issue between Sierra Leoneans and the English. By pointing to Wade, he returned to the idea that the English had betrayed their ideals. He rarely attempted to explain the existence of racism beyond its manifestations, instead restating and reinforcing the moral contradictions it represented within the Empire. He was not alone in presenting the racial issue as a white problem. H.W. Peet reviewed *What the Negro Thinks* by Dr. Moton, which tried to deflate common white ideas about Negro inferiority.[90] Peet also spoke of the supposed virtue amongst blacks for "turning the other cheek" and the need for education in Africa. But his tone aligned with the Rambler's during his conclusion. The black man's

[88] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 4, 1930, p. 9.
[89] Spitzer, "The Sierra Leone Creoles," p. 104.
[90] H.W. Peet, "Thinking Black; Books Which Help Us to Understand the Negro," SLWN, March 22, 1930, p. 4.

> desire is to be treated as a man, not to be excluded because of his colour from what the white man finds good, and to bring his own contribution to the common stock. The white man, fearful for himself, may attempt to hold the black race down. But he will do well to remember that "The Meek shall inherit the earth." He, like the African, can be meek... Only through co-operation between black and white and other colours shall the Kingdom of God come in[sic] earth.[91]

While the scopes of their goals were different, the Rambler's national and Peet's global, their solutions to racial antagonisms rested squarely on white shoulders. It was the whites who prevented progress on the racial front through their fear of the blacks.

The next year, the Colonial government used the importance of Sierra Leone as a naval and military station to justify the creation of legislation that could produce restrictions on free speech in the country or result in the deportation of Sierra Leoneans from their own country. The Rambler held the laws as "unconstitutional and entirely out of place in this country," affronts to the history of Sierra Leonean loyalty and more failures of Britain's imperial duty. He felt that Sierra Leone's performance during the colonial wars as well as the First World War was "without the slightest suggestion of defection from the straight path of loyalty."[92] The laws concerning possible deportation were especially offensive to him within the proposed imperial legal framework. He could not believe in equality between the separate sections of the Empire when such laws were not found in the United Kingdom.[93] He pointed to Gibraltar and Cyprus as conquered territory within the Empire and felt that the British were justified in taking similar "exceptional measures" in those territories. But Sierra Leone, he felt, was different not just from conquered territories, but from all the colonies in the Empire.

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[91] Ibid., p. 13.
[92] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 22, 1939, p. 12.
[93] Ibid.

> It is an apportionment by a Sierra Leone people – the Koya Temne – of a share of the ancestral estate to their kinsmen of Sierra Leone extraction – the Settlers from London, West Indies, and Nova Scotia, for whom the Sierra Leone Company was merely a Trustee. To meet the needs of the growing Settlement the Company, with the colonists' consent, transferred the care of the Trust to the British Crown. But as trusteeship does not mean ownership this Colony of Sierra Leone does not belong to the Crown but to the Sierra Leoneans and their descendants for ever.[94]

The British as trustees, he felt, had no right to deal with the "beneficiaries" of their trust as they liked. The Rambler demanded of the British that, as trustees of the Sierra Leonean people, they remember that they had voluntarily chosen to prepare Sierra Leone for self-government as well as to spread civilization "over Black Africa." Invoking the same emotion as before, he further claimed that the British had undertaken such a task to "make honourable amends" for the transatlantic slave trade.

Blyden granted the different races separate, inherent characteristics. He claimed that the whites were the innovators with a God-given sense of justice and were supposed to bring about "the material and temporal advancement of humanity."[95] The Rambler made use of Blyden's definition of whiteness to hold the British to the standards that formed the foundation of Sharpe's original Sierra Leonean venture. His rejection of white behaviour revolved around the contradictory nature of supposedly-benevolent white colonial rule when compared to an administration that failed as trustees, failed as innovators, and failed as dispensers of justice. Their involvement in Sierra Leone was unavoidable: even had the administration been manned completely by Africans, white businesses and missionaries were still deeply entrenched in Sierra Leonean society. But the Rambler's racial commentary focused most strongly on politics aside from religion or

[94] Ibid. While he here makes reference to the Colony of Sierra Leone, the rest of the text of the article suggest that he instead meant the Sierra Leonean state.
[95] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 112.

commerce. And why should it not? Creoles were Christians to the point that entry into Creoledom virtually required conversion[96] and economically Creoles still dominated the country's trading structure, with only a small minority of Lebanese immigrants posing any kind of threat.

For the Rambler, whites did not diminish the value of the Empire through their actions. Instead, they gave Creoles like him reason to appropriate the imperial rhetoric. The Rambler wanted to diminish race's place within the Empire. Doing so turned the British end of the cultural spectrum into a developmental ideology, making it more culturally accessible to Africans. In order to culturally pull Sierra Leoneans away from the British end and towards the Creole middle, he portrayed a Creole command of imperial morals to further define a Sierra Leonean identity. He implied that Creoles understood what the Empire was supposed to be doing in Sierra Leone, in terms of development and justice, better than the English did. Concerning the natives, by saying that Creoles knew what the Empire was better than the English, the Rambler could imply that natives that moved closer to Creoledom were not doing so on a path towards English civilization, but towards Creole status itself.

2.3 Separating the Empire from the British

Many Creoles traditionally felt, given the importance of British philanthropy to the origin of Sierra Leone, that they held a special place within the British Empire and that they should hold such a position to better facilitate development. Spitzer claims those

[96] Arthur T. Porter, Creoledom (London: Oxford University Press, 1963): p. 42.

Creoles saw the British as their mentors in that project,[97] but Kilson claims that they instead saw them as potential partners.[98] Fyfe adds that the Creoles valued and defended their legal and constitutional rights "tenaciously" as British citizens from British attempts at stronger control.[99] The Empire ideal was a tool that Creoles could use to make attacks on British failures to keep their civilizing promises and to define their future, picturing Sierra Leone as equal to the white nations of the commonwealth.[100] They understood that the Colonial Office was not interested in relinquishing control of Sierra Leone's developmental course.[101] Porter claims the relationship substantially weakened in 1905 with the creation of Freetown tribal headships. Legislation granted native leaders their own limited spheres of influence within the Colony in order to alleviate British officials of administrative overloading. As the British began to focus on the chiefs, rather than the Creoles, as the most productive political partners within Sierra Leone, the Creoles could not help but feel marginalized.[102] Porter further points out that the measures the British took concerning native administrations, rural and urban, intentionally or not prevented proper reconciliation between the natives and the Creoles.[103] The historiography reveals Creoles trying to keep a relationship with the Empire reminiscent of their first connection to it as settlers in the new Colony, but steadily realizing that the connection was disappearing and that the British were increasingly becoming a liability. The Rambler clung to the Empire as an ideal for Creoles, British and natives alike. While Creoles increasingly discarded the imperial nature of Sierra Leone, the Rambler held on, later

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[97] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 3.
[98] Martin Kilson, Political Change in a West African State (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966): p. 103.
[99] Fyfe, "1787-1887-1987," p. 413.
[100] Kilson, Political Change, p. 103.
[101] Wyse, H.C. Bankole-Bright, pp. 38-39.
[102] Porter, Creoledom, p. 62.
[103] Ibid.

using Granville Sharpe's ideals as weapons against a failing leadership during the Ethiopian Crisis.

The Empire as a moral concept let the Rambler point to the failures of the white members of the colonial apparatus, since proper adherence to the ideals of the Empire would not allow for contradictions like institutional racism and the failures of the British leaders in the Ethiopian crisis. In terms of a Sierra Leonean or Creole identity, loyalty to the Empire was not measured by British colonial officers' approval, but instead by political self-assertion within a framework of imperial loyalty. British influence needed to be regulated[104] with an African emphasis alongside it to strike the proper balance. He encouraged Sierra Leoneans, both Creole and native, to prove to the British that they were a strong, capable, independent African people with untapped potential that, if placed under less strict political control, could not but help the Empire.

Obviously, the Rambler had to reconcile his belief in the British Empire with his criticisms of British leadership. He did so by not specifying his position between submission to British commands and resistance, which gave his loyalty to the British Empire some flexibility. Resistance was something he thought was necessary for Sierra Leoneans, who faced a government intent on maintaining divisions between the Colony and Protectorate, but it could not become rebellion. A refusal to resist, he thought, would be perceived as weakness and risk slowing Sierra Leone's progress in the civilizing mission. In an early column, he noted a simple reason behind resistance. Racism, he claimed, would cause black children to grow up not properly appreciating the "noble, historic" Union Jack because its promises of "equal rights and unlimited opportunities"

[104] Gustave Kashope Deveneaux, "Public Opinion and Colonial Policy in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone," The International Journal of African Historical Studies 9, 1 (1976): p. 66.

only reached English children.[105] But he hoped that the British would redeem themselves of that racism and help black children appreciate the Empire's potential. In terms of submissiveness, the Rambler said that the British would never grant any kind of legitimacy to a nation that was "fettered with sanctimonious ideas of loyalty and submission" and that "national submissiveness spells national death."[106] He felt that only if Sierra Leoneans showed the whites that they were willing to assert themselves would they be able to win any respect from the British, and it was that respect that he hoped would win Sierra Leone equality with the white dominions.

Many British West Africans saw the Empire in the First World War fighting for their freedoms and those of the free world at large.[107] The Rambler presented the war as an opportunity to define Sierra Leone's place within the Empire in a manner which emphasized Africanness, but that also tried to reinforce the image of an "ancient and loyal Sierra Leone." The Empire's ideals, as the Rambler saw it, required the leadership to give each separate arm of the Empire a chance to contribute to the goals of the whole. He called on his readers to help prove Sierra Leone's capabilities as a member of the British Empire. He expected Sierra Leone's participation to prove the Colony's progress to the British and hoped to see a "day of reward," especially in light of Creole service on the front line.[108] Just after the war began, he presented some of the text of a letter from a "reader-friend" who said that "Sierra Leone is not behind in their willingness to help." The writer claimed that, while he could not serve as a proper soldier, he would "be too willing as well as consider it the greatest honour to fight and if possible die for our

[105] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 17, 1913, p. 6.
[106] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 31, 1915, p. 4.
[107] Wyse, H.C. Bankole-Bright, p. 32.
[108] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 1, 1915, p. 11.

gracious King and good old England." The Rambler said such sentiment would "find an echo in every Creole boy's heart."[109] He believed service was an indicator of racial equality as well as loyalty.

> The Empire can ill afford to harbour the cankerworm of discrimination and colour prejudice at such a critical moment. It needs to bring together all the resources at its command if its prestige must be upheld beyond any doubt. Why restrict the honour of serving and dying for our common Flag to the white man and deny it to the blackman?[110]

For the Rambler, taking part in the war effort served two purposes in terms of identities within Sierra Leone. It allowed Sierra Leoneans to boast to themselves that they were capable of performing nationhood's basic tasks alongside their imperial compatriot nations. In terms of the civilizing mission, the Rambler considered such involvement a watershed moment for Sierra Leone. The other benefit of service the Rambler hoped for was that it could provide recognition from other members of the global community which would grant Sierra Leoneans greater legitimacy in international contexts. Sierra Leoneans stood to gain prestige as Africans, not specifically Sierra Leoneans.

Still, the Rambler presented evidence of African progress wherever he could find it. He presented his readers with the Turcos, an elite, effective francophone African force on par with if not better than European fighters, who, he reported, had experienced significant success on the front. He used them to try to point to "African" virtues of patience, honour, and mercy, through the account of a captive German captain, treated with extraordinary patience by his Turco captor.[111] Furthermore, the presented role of the Turcos within the French forces provided an example of how the Rambler thought Africans should be treated within an imperial structure. The story gave his readers an

[109] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 7, 1914, p. 13.
[110] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 30, 1915, p. 11.
[111] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 24, 1914, p. 6.

example of African progress along civilizational lines that emphasized Blyden's ideals of patience and strength while showing Africans functioning well in a European context.

Aside from the idea that Africans could perform in the context of international conflict by the act of soldiering, the Rambler emphasized the role that Africans, specifically Sierra Leoneans, played through simple support. In May of 1915, he noted Sierra Leone's position as donors to the Sick and Wounded Fund.[112] The following August, he encouraged Sierra Leoneans to prove their productive capabilities by making palm leaf fans to circulate air in the infirmaries in Europe.[113] In 1916, after reading two pamphlets that detailed horrible conditions in German-occupied Belgium, the Rambler called for his readers to "prove that the African race has not ceased to be forgiving and sympathetic" by financially supporting the Belgian people, an effort he thought to require not more than five pence per man per day.[114]

But the Rambler did not grant imperial policy-makers any infallibility because of the war. Towards the end of the war, the Rambler let loose an attack on a colonial agenda that aimed to maintain divisions amongst Sierra Leoneans so as to prevent any national development. In October of 1918, shortly after he re-emerged from hiding from the influenza outbreak, he lambasted the editor of the *SLWN* for daring to commend the government's service during the outbreak while it tried to cause or exacerbate divisions between Sierra Leoneans.

> Do we really need to revise the views... that our Government is not a paternal one in that it gives no scope for native expansion, but rather seeks to keep us cribbed and confined; that its policy, so far from being calculated to encourage goodwill between Creole and aboriginal, tends to widen the unhappy gulf, which

[112] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 15, 1915, p. 4.
[113] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, August 21, 1915, p. 8.
[114] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 13, 1916, p. 9.

> the sensible members of each of these two sections are daily yearning and striving to bridge.[115]

The Rambler, only months before, said that the natives were grateful for the British presence in Sierra Leone.[116] The point of contact between the Empire and the Sierra Leoneans, the colonial government, failed to function properly for the Rambler. During the war, he made it clear that the Empire, as a moral construction, was worth service and self-sacrifice. But, despite the war continuing in Europe, he felt he was free to criticize the Colony and its leadership in their failures to perform properly as the supposed custodians of Sierra Leonean progress.

During the Rambler's absence in the twenties, the popular image of the Empire amongst Creoles began to suffer. The failure of Woodrow Wilson's "self-determination" and the new constitution of 1926 threatened Creole opinions of the Empire. The British did not channel Wilson's declaration to the Creoles, who, similar to the Rambler, expected some sort of reward for their support and service in the war. Creoles saw the victory in Europe as a victory exclusive to the white members of the Commonwealth, and Wilson's new ideas diminished to little more than platitudes.[117] The 1926 Sierra Leonean constitution governed both the Colony and the Protectorate. It granted legislative power to the chiefs for the first time in Sierra Leonean history, a move many Creoles saw as an attack on their strength in Sierra Leone.[118] The constitutional changes threatened to isolate the Colony politically from the chiefs and the administration. The executive council was made up entirely of Europeans. The legislative council was formed by twelve official members, and ten unofficial members. Of the ten unofficial members, only three

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[115] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 12, 1918, p. 8.
[116] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 13, 1918, p. 6.
[117] Wyse, H.C. Bankole-Bright, p. 33.
[118] Kilson, Political Change, p. 131

would be elected by voters from the Colony. Every other member of the legislative council, including three Protectorate chiefs, was appointed by the governor. While some Creoles tried to build bridges with the chiefs, considering the importance of up-country business to Freetown, the chiefs resented any outside influence and vigorously defended their positions. This further divided the country to the delight of the British, who did not want to deal with a unified Sierra Leone.[119] The popular sentiment amongst colonial officers was that the Creoles could no longer be trusted as the future custodians of the country,[120] and their rhetorical response to Creole objections was that it was time to "swing the pendulum" away from the Colony to a more pro-Protectorate policy.[121]

It soon became well known to the Creoles that the chiefs were little more than pawns of the government, silent during legislative debates, and that the overwhelming influence of the governor's appointees practically negated any input of the elected members from the Colony.[122] The Rambler criticized the chiefs. Increasingly during his second period of publication, while the chiefs insulated their position within the political structure, he saw them abusing their relationship with the British for their own gains,[123] and he blamed that abuse for the native peasants' lack of progress, which he thought included movements towards unity.

Still, the Rambler's loyalty to the Empire, though not necessarily the British, remained intact upon his return. He clung to the Empire as a tool for progress. In February of 1936, he explained his position on the role of British West Africa within the Empire. He did not limit his ideal to a unit within an overarching body.

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[119] Wyse, Bankole-Bright, p. 53.
[120] Porter, Creoledom, p. 62.
[121] Wyse, The Krio, pp. 82-85.
[122] Ibid., 58.
[123] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 23, 1932, p. 5.

> British West Africa can never be satisfied with the status of a mere "dependency," but aspires to responsible membership of the Empire. Her ideal is not however, that of Dominion self government, it is rather that of the much stronger bond that links France to her colonial empire. We do not want to be like Canada, South Africa, Australia or Ireland, owning an allegiance that can be whittled down to the point of secession... the innate fidelity of Coloured British Subjects will make the West Indian and West African Colonies Englands'[sic] staunchest friends who, like fond children, will prefer to stay on under the old paternal roof rather than hive away for themselves.[124]

He presented this ideal in order to focus his conception of where progress was going to take Sierra Leone. Its status as a colony was no longer enough. Nor were dominion status or independence acceptable. Instead, the Rambler provided an odd metaphor, at once wanting to be equal and subservient, both friend and child of the Empire.

The threat of conflict in Europe and the seemingly hypocritical inaction of the British, amongst others, in the face of Italian conquest in Africa caused the Rambler to take a new position on the military capabilities of the Creoles relative to the one he took during the First World War. Whereas before he had relied upon the protection of the Colony and Protectorate by the British, the new situation prompted him to call for the formation of a Creole militia. The Creoles, he felt, needed to practice "the noble art of self defence" given both Germany and Italy's "Colony-hunger" since the British could no longer be relied upon to provide proper protection for Sierra Leone. But at the same time, he believed a Creole defence force would be more effective than Protectorate troops. His reasons revealed again, similar to his reaction to the rumours of 1918, an underlying distrust of the Protectorate natives when Creole safety was involved. It was "unnatural" to expect either European military forces or troops from the Protectorate to "take the same interest in the protection of Creole homes as the Creoles themselves." He also evoked the Hut Tax War of 1898 to demonstrate the inability of the British to properly

[124] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 8, 1936, p. 8.

appraise dangers to Sierra Leone. He emphasized further that failure by pointing to the prevention of Creole participation in the military by the British.

> To prescribe the Sierra Leone Creole from this simple right and from this great privilege argues only one thing – that his loyalty is in question – a suggestion too absurd to entertain, since, as all the world knows, the Creole is reproached among up-country people with being "a black Englishman." Is it fair, then, to penalise a community, which has lost "caste" with its aboriginal kinsmen on account of its very loyalty to English rule, while the country's defence forces are recruited from Protectorate ranks?[125]

His message was that the British denied the Creoles two things; their place within the Empire and their right to self defence. According to the Rambler, the Creoles wanted a place within a citizen army that would allow them to "fight for king and country." But, beyond that, he claimed that "Natives of a country ought in mere fairplay [sic] to be accorded the right and privilege of defending themselves, their mothers, sisters and relations and of giving their lives for all they hold most dear."[126] The Rambler's conceptualization of the relationship between the British, the natives, and the Creoles distanced the Creoles from both the other groups since neither, he thought, could be counted on to come to the Creoles' aid. However, he maintained that the Creoles simply wanted to fulfill their imperial role. Once again, he claimed the British were making mistakes according to the promises inherent in their civilizing mission.

In the middle of the next month, he violently revised his public presentation of the historical relationship between Britain and Sierra Leone. Another commentator, the "Spectator," whom he felt had made "a cheap sneer at the activities of the Sierra Leone Youth Movement," dared to "glorify" slavery by remembering a tablet located at a hospital's gates in Freetown that "remind[ed] Sierra Leoneans of their previous condition

[125] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 26, 1938, p. 5.
[126] Ibid.

of servitude and their debt of gratitude to England." While the tablet had since been removed, the Rambler claimed that had the tablet still been hanging, the public would have forced the government to remove it. He felt that Sierra Leoneans could not afford to "keep slavery perpetually before the mind's eye" because it would "perpetuate the slave mind – a psychology that cannot make for progress." Soon after, he again vilified the British, claiming that Sierra Leone was founded by the British in an attempt to right "age long wrongs" manifested by slavery.[127] He then attacked England's role as the patron of the country, questioning the worth of its contributions to the Sierra Leonean people.

> What has England done for Sierra Leone in 150 years in comparison with what the Sierra Leone slaves did for England during their 400 years of forced labour in British plantations? Talk of gratitude.[128]

After noting the Lord Bishop of Durham's speech to the House of Parliament which vindicated the Rambler's claims that British merit was at stake in the Abyssinian crisis due to "the memory of almost intolerable wrongs inflicted by our nation in the past"[129] on the whole continent of Africa, the Rambler personalized his tone.

> You cheated me of 400 years' income, traded with it, made a million per cent profit and then flung a paltry 150 years' income back to me and expected me to put my hands behind my back and say "many, many thanks!" Can anything be more ridiculous? Who is to be grateful to the other? The cheat – or his victim? Not until the former makes full and complete reparation will there be any reasonable expectation of gratitude from the latter.[130]

In the same article, he warned the Youth Movement's sceptics that the political environment was changing. He compared the "national awakening" to an "approaching storm" that had "been gathering force for 150 years." He hoped that the movement would manifest in a common push towards political and economic improvement. Whereas

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[127] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 2, 1938, p. 9.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., emphasis in original.
[130] Ibid.

before, he had said that national progress was "natural," this time he went further calling the new movement the work of God.[131]

But his growing rejection of the British still did not translate into a desire for independence from the Empire. The day after Germany invaded Poland, "Rambling Talks" said that the Creoles wanted to take part in the defence of the Empire. No other part of the Empire was "more devoted" than the people of Sierra Leone, a people so loyal to the "Mother Country" that they could call England home.[132] After all, according to the Rambler, "the gallantry of Creole soldiers" enabled the extension of the British Empire into the Protectorate and along the West Coast of Sierra Leone. He attributed any British perceptions of Sierra Leonean disloyalty to failures on the part of the British.

> Englishmen who distrust us do so, perhaps, because they can't understand how while they themselves think nothing of turning traitors to their country and of selling its secrets to a foreign Power, an African can be so faithful to England.[133]

By the Rambler's account, the Creoles wanted to fight for the Empire, but were discouraged by racist obstacles they faced when they tried to enter the service. He pointed to optimistic recruits who continued to sign up for service "in spite of this threatened rift in the Lute of loyalty." He hoped that the show of loyalty would convince the colonial government to create a Sierra Leonean militia or a territorial army, for "You cannot find a braver type of African than the genuine Creole Boy."[134] But the final uptick of loyalty in his tone on the very cusp of the war did not signal a restoration of his former position. In the end, Creole service, for the Rambler, was a way of showing loyalty to the Empire, not to the English.

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[131] Ibid.
[132] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 2, 1939, p. 5.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

At the end of the Rambler's publishing career, his relationship with the British took a sudden turn for the worse. British failures to meet his expectations threatened his ideas about the civilizing mission. While it could not be said that Sierra Leoneans had not made progress towards attaining British standards, British racism risked rendering that progress irrelevant because it trivialized some British moral ideals. What good was fair play in an empire that had racial considerations? While he defended the assumed motivations of the British voting public, the British leadership, according to him, had lost nearly all of its merit through the many contradictions that its policies created in relation to his perception of its stated goals. He ceased presenting the British as the gatekeepers of civilization, instead portraying them as obstacles to national identity and progress. His early diplomatic tone made use of the same language of morality that the British had used to justify their continued presence in Africa. But it had fallen away, replaced by a harsh, frustrated criticism that appropriated the civilizing mission's terminology, publically turning it back on the British, appealing to a sense of unmet entitlement that he projected upon his audience. The Empire was still the measure of progress, but the English were no longer its guardians.

2.4 Cooperation

The Rambler's conception of how Creoles and natives could function together within a Sierra Leonean identity changed from issue to issue and even from tribe to tribe, sometimes back and forth. While he sought an ideal cultural distance between the British and Sierra Leoneans, he wanted the divide between the people of the Colony and the

Protectorate to collapse. The Rambler hoped that the Creoles and natives would discard "the artificial barrier[s]" manifested in the labels of settler, native and non-native towards a "common destiny."[135] This section of the chapter seeks to determine how he saw the social, economic and cultural gaps between the Creoles and the natives closing.

The Rambler's attempt at bringing the two peoples together under one identity had to contend with the Creoles' historical inability to decide on how a Sierra Leonean identity would combine both African and British traits. While Blyden had defined nativeness similarly to the concept of the noble savage, some black Sierra Leonean intellectuals wielded stereotypes of up-country tribes similar to those held by the European colonists in British settler colonies, calling members of certain tribes lazy or treacherous.[136] Other Creoles used nativeness as a pejorative term to convey filthiness.[137] But the Creoles were formed in large part by the Liberated Africans who mostly came from West Africa. More culturally similar to the natives of Sierra Leone than to the black settlers, their eventual entry into Creoledom, through conversion to Christianity and education, did not completely purge them of their traditions. Instead, to maintain their status as "civilized" Africans in the eyes of the Europeans and each other, they clung to some of their customs in private, never wholly embracing a new position as Englishmen. The Rambler also had to deal with a colonial government that made "every effort" to maintain the divisions between the peoples of both the Colony and Protectorate which prevented all but fleeting moments of solidarity.[138] Compounding that was the political reality of the Protectorate. It had a completely different political structure, dominated by

[135] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 18, 1932, p. 9.
[136] Spitzer, Creoles, pp. 72-73.
[137] Harrell-Bond, et al., Community Leadership, p. 7.
[138] Fyfe, "1787-1887-1987," p. 417.

the chiefs as the centralized nodes of power, despite colonial administrative attempts to exert control over them. Also, status in the Colony was determined by merit while in the Protectorate it was determined by lineage and competition between powerful families. The Rambler's natives toiled beneath the chiefs, some progressive, benevolent dictators, others belligerent obstacles to unity. Beneath them, but above the natives, the Rambler pointed to the sub-chiefs as corrupt opportunists and the true source of resistance to progress.[139]

The Rambler viewed the separation between the Creoles and the natives as a weakness for the country which allowed the whites to exert greater control over both groups and prevent them from forming into a Sierra Leonean whole. He assumed that integration between the two groups was unavoidable and advantageous to both. His solution was for Creoles to assimilate the natives. According to him, unity solved two problems. Aside from giving both groups more power relative to the whites, the process of unification, if controlled by the Creoles, would eliminate a possible cause of the disappearance of the Creoles, a notion many of them feared, including himself.[140] But, of both the Creoles and the natives, it was on the Creoles' side that he detected the greatest resistance to any kind of unity, noting a sense of superiority in which the lowest of the Creoles looked down upon the highest of the chiefs.[141]

The Rambler thought that the colonial government similarly understood the potential results of Creole and native unity, declaring that the government's efforts at maintaining a distance between the two groups stood in the way of Sierra Leone's progress. But the obstacles to unity he saw presented by both the Creoles and the colonial

[139] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, August 10, 1935, p. 9.
[140] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 10, 1917, p. 9.
[141] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 17, 1913, p. 6.

government did not prevent him from pointing to problems in the Protectorate. But those did not originate in the natives in general. The greatest source of tension was the chiefs. In June of 1915, after a paramount chief arrested a railway clerk, the Rambler criticized the chief for using chains, "a relic of slavery," to imprison the man, noting the racial context. He thought that the incident served as further evidence that the natives and the Creoles needed to make stronger efforts towards national unity.

> When friendship and love begins to exist between the Protectorate and the Colony our future as a people is assured. We have stood too long aloof from each other, but, thank God, our eyes have begun to open. The fault, I admit, lay with us in the Colony; but a great change is taking place among us and we have begun to see how foolish we have been all this time. Let us cultivate and extend this new spirit of brotherhood that has just been born among us.[142]

He went on to appeal to the chief on the grounds of race, speaking of "race-love, race-friendship and race-brotherhood" as means towards "one grand united Sierra Leone." The Rambler thus presented the chief as a man who held common goals with the Creole community, namely political unity, but had made a simple mistake. In reality, the Rambler left the chief's actual views on the political future of Sierra Leone undefined, nor did he discuss the crime that won the Creole his chains. Similar to his often forgiving portrayal of the whites, he explained away the actions of the chief as a simple momentary failure to follow the guidelines of tact and manners that the Rambler often portrayed as universal among the natives. The article was designed to fix and reinforce movements towards or desires for unity that existed within the popular discourse that the chief's actions damaged. For the Rambler, though, it was important to maintain consistency in his image of the native leadership and to explain away any deviation from it. A chief's mistake was easier to dismiss than a problem with native culture.

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[142] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 19, 1915, p. 9.

As for the natives in the Colony, Colony-born Sierra Leoneans increasingly could not claim to have kin groups devoid of natives, especially with a definition of kinship that often went beyond blood-relations.[143] But Creoles still tried to maintain a definite barrier between themselves and natives within the Colony, especially on social and moral grounds.[144] Early in his career, the Rambler followed a similar framework, thinking that "Creole" should function as a basic identity for Sierra Leoneans within the Colony, with modifiers, such as "Temne" or "Mende" used to identify one's heritage if it originated from outside the Colony.[145] But during his second period, he suggested "Creole" could cover a wider scope more inclusive to natives. Instead of Colonial Sierra Leoneans referring to themselves as Temne or Yoruba because of their lineage, the Rambler suggested that all Colony-area Sierra Leoneans refer to themselves as Creoles, regardless of heritage using the term to denote a new tribe.[146] He defined the Creole as "one born in a country where his ancestors were strangers," which, according to him, was a status applicable to a growing number of people within the Colony. Thus, Creole, at least in the eyes of the Rambler, began to evolve as a term used to denote a cultural identity. The Rambler was trying to find a way to solve the terminological problems presented by the growing mixture between the Creole and non-Creole communities that resulted in the blurring of the lines between the two bodies which threatened the Creoles with increasing cultural irrelevancy. But the definition that he provided for "Creole" demanded of anyone with a native heritage that they subordinate it to a new status as a descendant of strangers.

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[143] Cohen, Politics of Elite Culture, p. 65.
[144] Michael Banton, West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown (London: Oxford University Press, 1957): p. 213.
[145] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 25, 1918, p. 8.
[146] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 3, 1931, p. 12

Still, the Rambler's discussions of the political direction and desires of the natives lacked any real evidence of their intentions. Instead, he based what he had to say on stereotypes, provided by both the civilizing mission, which promised native potential, and Blyden, who defined the natives' intrinsic characteristics. He noted that parts of native culture could benefit the Creoles through the adoption of certain customs and behaviours. In 1918, while discussing the divisions within the Sierra Leonean black community, which included the England-goners, those who had not been to England, and the natives, he said that the "Colony-born folks" needed to make better efforts at self-discovery in order to foster unity and that the natives were "genuine Africans."[147] For instance, the Rambler thought Creoles should have considered emulating an ideal, yet simple, political awareness amongst native peasants, claiming that they discussed politics "between hoe-digs"[148] and even claimed that polygamy would help to solve some Creole marital problems.[149] But the Rambler did not want to adopt those measures because they would make the Creoles more native. He wanted to adopt them because he saw them as sensible. Through the Rambler's presentation of the natives, he could portray a Creole position within Sierra Leone that was evidence of progress. The Rambler wanted to say that, as the supposed vanguards of Sierra Leonean progress, the natives needed the Creoles since the Creoles could properly judge which aspects of both British and native society were acceptable enough to survive the synthetic process of the creation of a new national Sierra Leonean identity.

But, in June of 1918, the Rambler revealed an underlying conception of the natives. While late nineteenth century British racism pushed the Creoles towards the

[147] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 18, 1918, p. 8.
[148] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 30, 1915, p. 8.
[149] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 6, 1935, p. 5.

natives, [150] the Hut Tax War left an indelible mark still strong enough twenty years later to push the Rambler away from Blyden's ideal native, if only temporarily. Rumours of unrest up-country as well as a perceived return to the Colony of many up-country Creoles caused Freetowners to wrongly suspect something was afoot. The reality of the situation was that nothing was the matter. But the Rambler took part in the public paranoia when he asked why the press could dismiss a "matter so pregnant with possibilities" in a few lines. He invoked the Hut Tax War saying that the memory "takes some time to die," demanding the Executive carry out an investigation into any problems.[151] The Rambler still did not fully trust the natives, twenty years after the terror of the Hut Tax War. Not only did he suspend notions of unity in the face of public paranoia, but he appealed to the Executive to intervene on behalf of the Creoles, saying that only an "official pronouncement" from the Executive would calm Creole nerves. Suddenly, the natives were a liability to Creole safety rather than a solution to the need for progress. A few rumours from the Protectorate were all it took to dredge up the Rambler's true fears.

A month later, the Rambler diplomatically attempted to redraw his position. But his portrayal of the natives was clumsy. He provided his own "experience" of the natives, saying that his numerous up-country friends and acquaintances had "confessed themselves as devoutly grateful for the presence in their country of the Union Jack and the liberty and scope for progress it stands for," reviving the image of the progressive up-country citizen. His solution to native "dissatisfaction," was to minimize the bureaucracy that stood between the Protectorate's people and the Executive. He believed that a closer relationship between the Executive and the Protectorate natives would create

[150] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 3.
[151] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 29, 1918, p. 9.

opportunities for reforms, the absence of which had always, according to him, been the "real, rock-bottom cause of aboriginal dissatisfaction." But he also claimed earlier in the article that the British could "crush out any silly attempt that our Protectorate cousins may make to disturb the peace of our country," suggesting that he thought it was still a possibility.[152]

Within two paragraphs, he made use of two stereotypes of the natives. In the first instance, it was the image of the murderous savage from the Hut Tax War, which spoke to the still-present awareness amongst many Creoles of the hostility with which the natives greeted the original settlers.[153] In the second, he spoke of the noble native, grateful to both the Creoles and the British for their presence and help, and eager to advance within Sierra Leone. Here is visible a definitive problem of the Creoles' relationship with the natives. The Rambler carried two contradictory ideas about the natives simultaneously, portraying them as both potential partners and a looming danger. Thus, he here evinces one aspect of the Creole dilemma: he could not dismiss memories of native hostility to British ideas about progress while increasingly faced with the fact that Sierra Leone's future required cooperation between the Creoles and the natives.

While the Hut Tax War created an up-country bogeyman, it also benefited the chiefs. Those who remained loyal to the British in the war or at least did not participate entered into a partnership with the government designed to maintain the status quo,[154] and many exploited that position.[155] Just as the Rambler finished his first era of publication, an educated elite emerged in the Protectorate. This new class realized that it could

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[152] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 13, 1918, p. 6.
[153] Spitzer, Creoles, p. 83.
[154] Fyfe, "1787-1887-1987," p. 417.
[155] M. J. M. Sibanda, "Dependency and Underdevelopment in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1896-1939," African Affairs 78, 313 (October, 1979): p. 484.

establish a greater hold over the colonial government while the government saw them as a potential "moderating influence" on overly demanding chiefs, a view that would shape policy decisions for the British until independence.[156]

In 1932, the British claimed that tribal administration in Freetown had become ineffective. They cited the chiefs' inability to collect revenue, the decline in the number of legal disputes the chiefs oversaw, and the lack of control they could exert over members of their tribes, and concluded that tribal headship in Freetown needed to be abolished.[157] The Rambler took it as an opportunity to attack the institution of chieftancy in general. He declared that many of the natives that migrated to Freetown did so to live in a "healthier atmosphere," free from chiefs who were "a positive hindrance to progress."[158] To a certain extent, he was correct: the abolition of Protectorate slavery in 1928 produced an influx of freed slaves within the Colony.[159] But he took the migration as evidence that the Protectorate people had stopped supporting their chiefs and wanted a "sweeping reform in native policy." He also attributed part of the problem to the British. While he said that the Protectorate community in the Colony was much happier under the Colonial legal system – "where bribery and oppression are unknown and justice is administered without respect of persons" – he held the British responsible in part for the Protectorate chiefs' corruption because the British protected chiefs guilty of extorting their people.[160] For instance, he thought a case in which the colonial courts sided with a

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[156] Kilson, Political Change, pp. 103-104.
[157] Harrell-Bond, et al., Community Leadership, pp. 138-139. The British' motivations go unexplored, but they showed either a substantial unfamiliarity with the 1905 legislation establishing tribal administrations within Freetown or a considerable disregard for it. In any case, the British re-instituted the headmen's legal power within a year of abolishing it and the Rambler made no comment over the matter.
[158] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 23, 1932, p. 5.
[159] J.D. Hargreaves, "The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898," Cambridge Historical Journal 12, 1 (1956): p. 57.
[160] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 23, 1932, p. 5.

chief who ejected a Creole from disputed land despite a previous agreement between the Creole and chief, threatened to remove the Creoles from their rightful place in the Protectorate. He thought the ruling was an affront to unity, outside of the original spirit of the settlers' relationship with the natives in 1787, and invoked Nembana's claim that the settlers and natives were brethren.[161] For the Rambler, the government's involvement signalled an official approval of ethnic division. Removing or restraining the chiefs would help to nullify those barriers by allowing the Creoles to properly penetrate the Protectorate and engage its people face to face rather than through the chiefs.

He supported and suggested ideas designed to weaken chiefly control over the natives. He predicted that land law reforms in April, 1932, which moved to empower individuals as land owners, would put a stop to chiefs negotiating land deals over the heads of the peasants.[162] He further hoped that new laws were a signal that the Government would move towards more progressive administrative systems than the "crude" Native Administrations, which the chiefs used to harass and enslave their subjects.[163] His own conception of the best reforms reduced the number of chiefs by seventy-five percent, a number he thought was not yet good enough in the opinion of some Protectorate natives,[164] and introduced mechanisms of control, such as measured income, limited terms, and elections,[165] all designed to put more power in the hands of the peasants. Once the natives held that power, he hoped to use the natives within the Colony as messengers of "brotherhood and nationalism" sent by the Creoles. He assigned

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[161] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 22, 1932, p. 9. Nembana was the chief that sold the land that would become Freetown to the original settlers.
[162] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 23, 1932, p. 5.
[163] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 23, 1932, p. 5, May 21, 1932, p. 9, and April 8, 1933, p. 9.
[164] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 23, 1932, p. 5.
[165] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 8, 1933, p. 9, December 16, 1933, p. 4, and August 18, 1934, p. 5 respectively.

the initiative to the Creoles, declaring that the natives were "shy folk," in need of coaxing towards action.[166] The Creoles needed to reach past the chiefs in order to maximize the potential for greater unity and use it to create a better Sierra Leone.

The Rambler's commentary on the natives places him with most other Creoles who could not successfully reconcile themselves with the natives, still struggling with the Creole problematic. Despite the problems with Freetown tribal administrations, the British and the Protectorate chiefs were increasingly dealing directly with each other, politically marginalizing the Creoles and affirming Creole fears of imminent cultural marginalization. But he defined unity in terms that allowed for Creole optimism. On the spectrum between the British and the natives, the Rambler hoped that the natives would collapse into the center, towards the Creoles. Politically, he hoped they would democratize, leaving behind traditional chiefly power structures. Economically, he hoped they would better align with the Creoles in order to generate a greater standard of living, which conveniently would allow the Creoles to maintain their own. Culturally, the collapse did not as heavily favour the Creoles, but, despite his Blydenesque belief that the natives held aspects of true Africanness, he still hoped to see education penetrate the Protectorate to a greater extent. The Rambler channelled the civilizing mission in all three of his desired collapses. The goals of those collapses though did not exactly mimic those of the British civilizing mission. In the end what the Rambler did not want or need were more Anglophiles. The goals were no longer strictly English standards. The Rambler no longer pursued democracy because it was a British ideal, instead pursuing it because it helped to foster development through the shedding of self-serving chiefs. Economically, raising the standard of living was sensible to any people, not exclusively the British.

[166] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 28, 1933, p. 9, emphasis mine.

Similarly, even though he thought the use of British teaching styles and standards would benefit Sierra Leonean students, education did not mean anglification. At the end of his publishing career, the best track he felt native progression could follow was one set by Creole examples under a new Creole civilizing mission. In such a framework, the Creoles ceased to be threats to native culture and became indispensible guides for native progress.

2.5 Conclusion

The Creole problematic leaves Creoles floating somewhere between the English and the natives, uncertain of how to reconcile the two sides. The Rambler never outgrew that. His efforts to build a Sierra Leonean identity failed to articulate any specifics until the Youth League arrived and Wallace-Johnson's extreme rhetoric jerked Sierra Leoneans, the Rambler included, towards an anti-colonial unity. But, before that, he was at least successful in defining the negative forces pushing inward from the British and African poles which disrupted Sierra Leone's ability to progress. Whites, he felt, had lost their place as the stewards of Sierra Leonean development. While they provided cultural ideals that the Rambler thought Sierra Leoneans should assimilate, their increasingly racist behaviour was no longer acceptable. On the opposite side, he saw a still-dangerous, dictatorial group of chiefs and corrupt sub-chiefs that needed to be marginalized and phased out of power. Proper Sierra Leoneans needed to distance themselves from the English and grow past the need for the chiefs. But in the end, he was trying to build a Sierra Leonean identity that relied too much on negatives for affirmation.

That cultural definition left a lot of room to manoeuvre rhetorically. The Rambler's career saw the British and the chiefs strengthening their ties at the expense of Creole influence. His response was to tacitly equate being a Sierra Leonean with Creoledom. For the natives, he tried to attract them with desires to raise the standard of living across the country and to give them greater political power and legal rights. For the Creoles, he tried to grant them greater moral status and authority by repeatedly pointing to British failures in the civilizing mission, a mission to which he hoped they would remain true. He tried to give them something around which to socially coalesce that was positive, rather than fears that they were strangers in their own homeland, threatened with obsolescence by the Syrians, abandonment by the British, and cultural absorption by the natives. He tried to portray Creoledom as necessary to the development of Sierra Leone. But his inability to go into specifics about what Creole dominance meant in terms of its effect on native traditions or how it would politically, financially, and constructively operate independent of the English is where he failed to resolve the Creole problematic.

Chapter 3
"De Little Gyarden Plot"

This chapter addresses the Rambler's conception of the nature, measure and purpose of government involvement in the agricultural sector. Especially during the early period of his publishing, he portrayed the government as an ally-in-waiting for would-be farmers. His rhetoric was often filled with notions of what the government could and should have done to foster greater growth and development and he believed the government could not but have invested in agricultural progress because it subscribed to the civilizing mission. Since the British colonial administration was not intent on colonial progress so much as colonial profitability, two Ramblers become possible in relation to the colonial government's motivations. The first Rambler is not aware of the British lack of interest while the second Rambler is. In both cases, the ostensible imperial purpose is his tool. The first Rambler encouraged the government to cooperate using the civilizing mission as a reminder of what should be happening while the second used his public appeals to that purpose to try to force some sort of action. This work assumes that he was not aware, given his writing under a pseudonym and the traditional boldness with which West African journalists operated.[167] Had the Rambler been aware of the government's ambivalence, he would have written much more explicitly about their failure to follow through on their own obligations as determined by the civilizing mission. Regardless, what is important here is what he thought the government and Sierra Leoneans should have been doing and his failure to use the rhetoric of the civilizing mission to either encourage or force change.

This chapter also focuses on the Rambler's failed attempts to cause Sierra

[167] Omu, "The Dilemma," p. 280.

Leoneans, especially Creoles, to undertake agriculture in order to facilitate economic and political progress. The Rambler was too much at odds with Creole apathy regarding agricultural realities to be successful. His primary intention was to encourage the proper exploitation of Sierra Leone's farming potential. The Rambler thought that a stronger agricultural sector would help to solve several problems in Sierra Leone, like creating an overarching Sierra Leonean identity and helping to raise the natives' standard of living, a necessary step towards better relations between the Creoles and the natives.

He was not the first to tie African agricultural development to national and cultural progress: His most notable predecessor, Edward Blyden, claimed that "Africa will largely be an agricultural country"[168] because of a supposed African orientation towards agriculture.[169] He thought that Africans did not belong in busy cities, but instead belonged in the countryside where they could properly farm the land.[170] Blyden linked Sierra Leonean agricultural development to its national prosperity[171] and called Sierra Leonean agricultural pioneers like Samuel Lewis and William Grant patriots.[172] He also suggested that Africans would grow culturally stronger the closer in communion they were with nature and that agriculture would serve to that end.[173] In his last great work, *African Life and Customs*, he said that the African commune's place in the world was to "dress the garden and keep it" as a cooperative.[174] He believed in developmental techniques that foreshadowed the ones the Rambler hoped to use, especially English

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[168] Edward Blyden, "Origin and Purpose of African Colonization," in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967): p. 110.
[169] Van Hensbroek, Political Discourses, p. 47.
[170] Frenkel, "Edward Blyden," p. 281.
[171] Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden, p. 91
[172] Edward Blyden, "Sierra Leone and Liberia," in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967): p. 205.
[173] Robert W. July, "Nineteenth-Century Negritude: Edward W. Blyden" Journal of African History, 5, 1 (1964): p. 78.
[174] Edward Blyden, African Life and Customs (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1994): pp. 9-11.

investment in African potential, and also tried to entice the English to make good on their developmental promises using a similar language of British justice and altruism.[175]

The Rambler appealed to similar veins, making Blydenesque[176] references to the African's natural inclination to the soil as a means to social progress. He hoped a growing proto-national consciousness would goad more Sierra Leoneans, especially Creoles, into working in their own vegetable gardens. He thought simple developments would help to wean the Creoles off of popular, but expensive, English imports and it was through the combined efforts of native and Creole farmers that he saw an opportunity to improve the "deplorable" condition of Sierra Leone's dependence on Britain. Key to his belief was the assumption that Sierra Leoneans could, should and wanted to follow through with such advancements and, further, that the colonial administration would help. However, neither the British nor the Creoles followed through on his ideas. The British focused their attention to agricultural affairs in the Protectorate and paid little notice to stagnant peninsular efforts. The Creoles, on the other hand, took little interest in agriculture, instead focussing on clerical and trading jobs that proved much more lucrative.[177]

Along with the rhetorical struggle, the country's agricultural reality suggests that the Rambler's assumptions about how well Sierra Leone could perform were excessively optimistic. Since the beginning of the Colony, its demand for food outpaced its ability to produce it. The Freetown traders established links along the coast and into the hinterlands and created a supply network that stretched across the country's coastline, most of it well

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[175] Lynch, Edward Blyden, p. 92. Also see pp. 177-178 for a similar instance involved in the Liberian coffee industry in which Blyden felt that British investment and African man-power would best serve to energize the Liberian producers.
[176] The Rambler made references to the soil many times during the First World War, linking it to patriotism, freedom, and national progress, but not explicitly pointing to Blyden.
[177] T.F. Victor Buxton, "The Creole in West Africa," Journal of the Royal African Society 12, 48 (July, 1913): p. 387.

outside the Colony's boundaries.[178] The Colony held little large-scale agricultural value. W. Hopkins, the director of agriculture in Sierra Leone, said in 1915 that the colonial peninsula, which included Freetown, was too hilly for decent agricultural production. Only the lower slopes and valleys were at all useful for growing food.[179] In terms of the Protectorate, when the Rambler spoke to a greater Sierra Leonean agricultural self-sufficiency, he failed to understand the natives' apathy towards such a developmental agenda. Any foreign attempts at control over the peasant farmers, especially one based in nationalist sentiment, had to contend with a glaring lack of infrastructural development in the majority of the country and the fact that the natives at least perceived themselves to be in nowhere near a similar state of economic dependence or subordination as the Creoles, despite the fact that Creoles generally had a better standard of living.[180]

In terms of the Creole problematic, the Rambler was faced with three things. On the British side of the agricultural question, the government would not budge towards investment. At the Creole centre, he wanted the Creoles to take to their home gardens and support anyone in the community who aimed for greater accomplishments within the Sierra Leone community. They could have set an example for the rest of the Sierra Loeneans. As for the natives, he hoped that the promise of better agricultural progress would bring them closer towards the Creole center of the spectrum. But none of these ideal results occurred. The British refused to spend their money within Sierra Leone. The Creoles, for the most part, gave no second thought to agricultural schemes. And finally the natives across the country had little reason to get involved with an agricultural

[178] J. Barry Riddell, "Periodic Markets in Sierra Leone," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 64, 4 (December, 1974): p. 545.
[179] W. Hopkins, "Agriculture in Sierra Leone," Journal of the Royal African Society 14, 54 (January, 1915): p. 143.
[180] Sibanda, "Dependency," p. 485.

movement when their own spheres of influence worked well enough.

Why did the Rambler advocate agricultural development and what do his ideas about it reveal about his own Creole problematic? The reality of the agricultural situation within the Colony, as presented by some of the colonial records of the time, suggests that his optimism was unfounded. What we can see then in the Rambler's mind is a faulty perception of Sierra Leonean agricultural potential, not a proper command or appreciation of its truths. The extent to which he took Sierra Leonean agricultural vitality for granted was such that he thought concerted simple efforts would lead to overall Sierra Leonean progress. Where did he see that agricultural progress leading Sierra Leoneans? Did he think agricultural progress would make Sierra Leoneans more like either the natives or the British? Or did he think that it was an opportunity for the Creoles to further define themselves by creating an admixture of Western and African agricultural methods, products and ideas in order to further culturally define Creoledom?

3.1 The Agricultural Mirage

Agricultural self-sufficiency and independence were part of the Rambler's hopes for Sierra Leone's future. Self-sufficiency was ideologically flexible enough that anti-colonialists, imperialists, and colonial officials could all agree on its practicality for Sierra Leone. The Rambler imagined a grandiose future of a self-sufficient country making full use of its farming potential. Especially during the First World War, with increased exports to Europe, he wanted to explore the high end of Sierra Leone's productive potential and predicted that it would show Sierra Leone to be a capable

producer and exporter of fruits and vegetables. He claimed that, with "no mean possibilities," Sierra Leone could in the future hold significance in the world food market.[181] However, the Rambler's ideas ran up against a Creole mindset that relegated farm work to those outside the Colony. The Rambler essentially suggested to a mostly urban, middle class, Creole readership that it needed to change part of its everyday culture by becoming more like agriculturally competent natives. The Rambler made comments only when circumstances suggested a greater receptiveness amongst his readers. This section asks what kind of ideas he suggested to his readers to determine just what he thought they were capable of.

The Rambler's first substantive mention of agriculture in May of 1913 made clear his belief that any agricultural progress was a benefit to Sierra Leone. The beginning of the rainy season, he said, allowed Creoles to heed the call of "back to the soil" and put every person with land to work in their gardens. He declared "the interest our people are now taking in agriculture" to be evidence of progress out of a "state of abject dependence." He did not give any details about his notion of dependence, but the Creoles' taste for imported, especially British, goods at the time was clear. Food made up more than twenty percent of the total value of Sierra Leonean imports for 1913 and two thirds of these were from Britain.[182] Sierra Leoneans also chose British exports over other cheaper alternatives: for example, before the First World War, German sugar was the primary competitor to British sugar and was 10% less costly, but only sold half as well.[183]

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[181] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 16, 1918, p. 8.
[182] Sierra Leone Blue Book 1913 (Freetown: Government Printing Office, 1914): pp. W1-W5. This excludes British colonies, possessions and protectorates.
[183] Ibid., p. W48.

The Rambler called for the diversification of food industries to better facilitate self-sufficiency. In January of 1916, in response to food shortages caused by high wartime import duties on foreign foodstuffs, the Rambler called on Sierra Leoneans to "leave imported provisions severely alone"[184] and substitute them with locally produced items which would, according to him, bring the import costs down due to increased competition.[185] In April of 1918, he said that corn-flour and sugar-substitute manufacture would both allow for industrial expansion and protect against future shortages. However, he claimed that developing those industries needed to be done carefully because of the separation between the producers and consumers of regular flour and sugar.[186] But his calls centered on the cities within the Colony. Part of his call for substitute manufacture was a warning against a price hike from rural farmers selling genuine sugar and flour.[187]

The Rambler felt that Europeans had no right to exert control over African agriculture. It was not a rejection of European methods or investment. The Government was still the greatest potential source of land titles and capital that he saw. But he thought that Africans needed to be free to develop on their own. He objected to a European man that came to Sierra Leone to begin large scale farming operations, wondering if it was a sign that soon foreigners would sell Sierra Leonean raw materials to Sierra Leoneans. [188] He also pointed to Lagos where black Lagosians could not buy certain food items without a permit and it was "taboo" for them to even own butter or milk. He noted the productive potential of the Lagosian protectorate, "where pure native butter and cow's milk

[184] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 29, 1916, p. 6.
[185] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 29, 1916, p. 6.
[186]" Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 6, 1918, p. 9.
[187] Ibid.
[188] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 6, 1916, p. 8.

abound"[189] and thought that the Lagosians, "with their reputation for race pride and unitedness," as well as their underutilized agricultural resources, should consider boycotting the firms until they were forced to leave Nigeria. While his rhetoric did not constitute a purely independence-minded agenda, he warned that failing to develop Sierra Leone's capabilities would lead to "denationalisation," claiming that "we should not wait until we get acres of land and hundreds of pounds, with 'scientific' learning on top of it before we begin to work out the salvation of our country."[190]

His criticisms of European agricultural control even came during the war despite his strong support of Britain's war effort. While some of his other columns celebrated even negligible Sierra Leonean participation in the war effort, he was not afraid to object to imperial orders that unfairly affected those outside of the metropole. In early 1917, palm oil had "become a necessity to Europe" and as a result, the Government tried to convince the Sierra Leoneans to consume less of the oil. The Rambler responded with indignation.

> Is the African never to be free from anxious care? Is he to be fore ever [sic] an object of exploitation? Is he never to be left alone to dwell in security under his own vine and fig tree? We are told that we eat too much of our native oil; this is called a waste, forsooth, and we are commended to get used to other articles of food. Perhaps the good men of the Empire Resources Committee would have us cram our esophag with the delicious and often deleterious foods of Europe![191]

Here he linked the ability to control raw resources, specifically food, to national self-determination, and also tried to bring about some popular rejection of an imperial actor that he felt was overstepping its bounds. This, along with his earlier rejection of the high tariff on British imports, suggests that his support of the Empire came with a price. He

[189] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 21, 1917, p. 8.
[190] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 6, 1916, p. 8.
[191] Ibid.

rejected that which he felt unreasonably affected the lot of the Empire's lesser members as a failure of the Empire to follow its own ideals of justice and fairplay.

The Rambler thought the Colony needed the most development and that Creoles needed to be the ones to do it. But he noted that they used as a "stock objection" to avoid garden work the belief that agriculture required too much capital and scientific training. The Rambler countered that peninsular diets relied on native farmers, none of whom had any official training or substantial capital. He went on to say that he had no intention of bringing Creoles into the large-scale, agricultural exporting business. His idea was that even small plots of land could yield subsistence-level crops of "corn, cassada,[192] yam, potato and other odds and ends." He believed that once such small scale efforts were in "full swing," garden owners would understand an old proverb that said "'Der ain't no use'n slavin' at de hateful office desk,' while 'Dere's enough ter keep us libin in de little gyarden plot.'"[193] He expected that such minor efforts in agriculture could prove to be effective at changing Sierra Leonean society for the better.

The Rambler understood that any public motivation towards agricultural development depended on such a scheme's aggressive presentation in the public discourse by him and fellow "zealots" of agriculture of what it required and the benefits it provided. The Rambler fielded an accusation from "Small Holder" that he was pessimistic about the possibilities of his "Agricultural Movement" given the realities of the availability of land. He countered by pointing to agricultural practices that did not necessarily require large plots of land, especially the rearing of livestock. He pre-empted critics that would say that raising financially viable numbers of livestock would take too

[192] The Rambler refers to cassava as 'cassada' throughout his career.
[193] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 24, 1913, p. 6.

much time; "If there is one lesson above all others which Nature is ever teaching us, it is the lesson of patience." He also encouraged ambitious beginners to start at a small scale and work towards larger and larger goals. He agreed with Small Holder's idea to organize small scale farms into larger, town- or village-sized operations in order to better control resources and to facilitate better agricultural education through stronger contact with educators.[194] In a June 1917 article he claimed that "agricultural propaganda" succeeded in convincing even the Government that the agricultural movement was "something more than a craze or mere fancy – something worthy of official encouragement," proven by its support for an agricultural show.[195]

The Rambler reacted positively to efforts that Sierra Leonean groups made at trying to gain control over their agricultural future. In October of 1917, he welcomed the Agricultural and Horticultural Society and the Sierra Leone Agricultural Association. Despite the fact that the Association met only once a month and their "practical work" had not yet begun, the Rambler was optimistic about its commitment "to a big programme."[196] Marillia Van voiced similar sentiment, claiming that the association could help to inspire confidence amongst prospective Sierra Leonean agriculturalists, despite her worries that similar bodies tended not to last long.[197] The Association had little land and the Rambler encouraged them to negotiate with the Government for ownership or use of Crown property within the Colony, or easy access to Protectorate lands. This allowed him to place pressure on the Government because if they refused to help, the Rambler would be able to say to his readers that a well-intentioned group of

[194] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 16, 1915, p. 9.
[195] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 30, 1917, p. 9.
[196] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 20, 1917, p. 8.
[197] Marillia Van, "Random Jottings," SLWN, September 15, 1917, p. 4.

potential farmers were unable to follow through with their plans because of problems that the Government refused to solve or to assist in solving.

But his "agricultural movement" existed only within a select few commentators' rhetoric. Marillia Van, a fellow columnist, made a few substantial references to agricultural progress and what she thought it would mean for the country. Several editorials were dedicated to the subject as well. One lengthy string of articles written by S.D. Turner, an actual West African agriculturalist, gave instructions on how specifically to grow many different crops and included one instalment which parroted all of the Rambler's ideas of government involvement in agriculture in a quarter of a page.[198] But outside of the editorials, the whim of the regular contributors, and Turner's contributions, there were no signs of an actual movement. The *SLWN*, at one point, accused agriculturalists of having no solid plan and having built a platform on nothing but "big talk."[199] While the agriculturalists did have some "useful suggestions" for policy, their associations were plagued by the traditional problems of "disuse and [a] lack of sustained leadership"[200] that surrounded Sierra Leonean interest groups.

Just how successful he thought his drives for progress could ever have been he did not say. Early efforts at large-scale crop production in the Colony saw limited success because of soil problems. Cattle-borne diseases ravaged stock-farming, further preventing the use of manure for fertilization.[201] Blyden noted the "impossibilities" of the Sierra Leonean soil.[202] Sam Lewis, the prominent Sierra Leonean lawyer, experimented

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[198] S.D. Turner, "Agricultural Notes," SLWN, June 30, 1917, p. 4.
[199] "Native Agricultural Association," SLWN, November 17, 1917, p. 9.
[200] Wyse, H.C. Bankole-Bright, p. 23.
[201] J. D. Hargreaves, A Life of Sir Samuel Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1958): p. 3.
[202] Edward Blyden, "Sierra Leone and Liberia," in Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967): p. 205.

with plantation-style farming in the late 19th century, propping up the project with his own capital. He failed blaming inexperience and a lack of proper mechanical implements for the loss.[203] Thus, the Rambler was trying to convince a Creole readership, traditionally suited to trading, to take on the difficult and intensive task of revolutionizing Sierra Leonean agriculture. Not surprisingly, then, his calls for development did not demand large scale investment and he left his goals for Sierra Leone poorly defined. His message maintained its low intensity despite the separate circumstances that brought about a renewed appeal to the people to grow more food or raise more livestock. The success stories he presented, including his own, often were the results of very small scale efforts, suggesting that those that actually participated did so in a manner that required the smallest risk and the least amount of work. In any case, the majority of his readers did not go along with it.

3.2 Colonial Assistance

The colonial administration intended to increase Sierra Leone's industrial capabilities, but wanted to do so as a facilitator of outside investment rather than as a financier.[204] Unfortunately, investors found further investment in tropical Africa to be "generally unattractive"[205] because they were already comfortable with their existing successful and secure operations that made use of social and physical infrastructures.[206] Any investment that firms did make happened under minimal control from the

[203] Hargreaves, A Life, pp. 81, 101.
[204] P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, British Imperialism, 1688-2000 (London: Longman, 2001): p. 566.
[205] Ibid, p. 570.
[206] David Meredith, "Government and the Decline of the Nigerian Oil-Palm Export Industry, 1919-1939," Journal of African History 25, 3 (1984): p. 313.

government as well as with no consensus from the separate investors.[207] The Rambler criticized what he saw as a stubbornly static lack of effort on the part of the British to follow through on the civilizing mission. The colonial government, along with the European banks, often failed to meet his expectations concerning their role as the supposed custodians and enablers of Sierra Leonean progress. It was in agriculture that he thought their task was the simplest and most straightforward, but their performance the least productive and most disappointing. Often he attempted to bring political pressure on them by highlighting their shortcomings in his columns. The Rambler wanted to see an active, interested, and fair Britain carrying out a consistent and pragmatic agenda aimed at the creation of a Sierra Leonean partner, which the British did not provide. This section asks if he reconciled that failure of the civilizing mission and how.

The most common issue over which he appealed to the colonial government was land availability. He called on the government to prove that it had "the interest of its subjects at heart" and facilitate land purchases for Creoles in the Protectorate. In the autumn of 1915, the completion of the Thomas Agricultural Academy, an independent trade school designed to train students with modern Western techniques, prompted him to outline what he thought were the remaining substantial problems for Sierra Leonean agricultural progress: land and money.[208] While the graduates of the school would be well trained for farming, he wondered if any of them would have the land necessary to begin working. The government's attempts at claiming prime land on the peninsula as Crown lands, he said, did not signify any likely government support, especially when the government held much of the more productive lands within the Colony and sold lots at

[207] David Meredith, "The Colonial Office, British Business Interests and the Reform of Cocoa Marketing in West Africa, 1937-1945," Journal of African History 29 (1988): p. 286.
[208] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 11, 1915, p. 9.

prices too high for beginning farmers. The Rambler called on the government to reduce the price for land with the caveat that purchased land had to be used for agricultural purposes and would be forfeit if operations did not begin "within a reasonable time." As for up-country development, he claimed that "either the law or the administration of the Protectorate is not over friendly towards the Creoles," while carefully avoiding implicating the Protectorate chiefs.[209] In 1918, he claimed that land needed to be made "available to every willing worker" so that they could grow their own materials. Sierra Leoneans were "at a loss," he said, when they tried to understand the government's appropriations.

> Perhaps here... we are in error as to the measure of our Government's generosity. I hope indeed that we are in error, and nothing will please me better than to see our political father come out of his shell with outstretched arms and a paternal smile on his face and say; "Now, my children, you have misjudged me all the time. Look at all those acres of land. All are yours, as long as you are in for serious work." Let us wait and see.[210]

Here he attempted to bring the government in line with its own "paternal" mission. It was not a rejection of the civilizing mission so much as a diplomatic attempt to hold the civilizers to their own supposed agenda.

The government's interest in the agricultural land issue within the Colony was minimal. They already knew the land was unworkable. Creole agricultural pioneers, like Sam Lewis, had already experienced the frustrating limits of Sierra Leonean soil. Government research in the form of a1914 survey of soil quality in Sierra Leone reported that all of the soil in the Colony needed protection from the heavy rains, in the form of either wild vegetation or crops, which had to be annually maintained in order to prevent

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[209] Ibid.
[210] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, April 6, 1918, p. 9.

the soil's ruination.[211] The results of that testing did not reach the Sierra Leonean public until September 1917.[212] In terms of actual action, government land grants within the Colony between 1912 and 1919 did not amount to more than a hundred acres. The area in and immediately around Freetown received less than twenty.[213] The Rambler's requests for land went largely unheeded because the administration understood that any agricultural expansion in the Colony was going to be difficult in the first place. Rather than wasting time and money on trials in the Colony, the colonial government limited its attention to agricultural tests carried out at an experimental farm at Jala, well into the Protectorate and unbeknownst to most Sierra Leoneans,[214] and only noted unusual successes in the Colony in the interest of looking for new, promising evidence of the viability of yet-untested methods or crops. The Rambler was essentially appealing to a government that was uninterested in pursuing agricultural expansion in the Colony which they felt was agriculturally unproductive in the first place.

Aside from land grants, the Rambler looked to the colonial government for financial assistance for agricultural development. The Academy and its graduates, according to the Rambler, had the potential for success in terms of large scale agriculture. But graduates could not succeed without substantial financial assistance in order to obtain farming appliances and pay the first season's labour costs. The Rambler wanted to see the Academy's graduates using "modern scientific" farming methods, employing substantial labour, and obtaining a professional level of production, very similar to Lewis'

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[211] Douglas W. Scotland, "Appendix B – Report on Soils of Sierra Leone," Annual Report of the Agricultural Department for the Year 1914 (Jala, Sierra Leone: Agricultural Department, 1915).
[212] "Annual Reports of the Colony of Sierra Leone," SLWN, September 29, 1917, p. 8.
[213] See Sierra Leone Blue Books (Freetown: Government Printer) from 1912 through 1919, pp. AA1-AA2.
[214] "Jala," SLWN, October 13, 1917, p. 8.

experiments, except backed by British investment.[215] This was not the garden-plot, grass-roots level he would later encourage during his discussion of the exhibitions. He appealed to the Bank of British West Africa for an agricultural bank, using undertones of the civilizing mission.

> Might not the Bank of British West Africa give this matter a thought and lend a helping hand to the people among whom they have been so generously blessed? The Bank of British West Africa would not only benefit materially by the arrangement, it would also have the gratification of knowing that it has been instrumental in the birth of the New Sierra Leone – Sierra Leone in prosperity – which looms so plainly behind this agricultural movement.[216]

Almost six months later, he appealed to the Government, though not explicitly, to assure students graduating from the Academy that "after the completion of their course, they would be given facility to acquire land in the Protectorate by cheap lease, if not by purchase or by grant."[217] He clarified further the following February, declaring that the trustees of the Academy needed to lower tuition so the agricultural movement could appeal to the "ambitious poor."[218] But the students could expect little from the Government. Neither the Colonial Reports nor even the annual Agricultural Department papers even mentioned the Academy in the years following its completion and instead only focused on the experimental farm's performance and any progress visible from the native farmers. The Academy was a hopeless rhetorical showpiece for the Rambler's agricultural drive. But he certainly considered it an example of a Sierra Leonean effort at agricultural progress that, along with the proper colonial cooperation, could have resulted in a monumental example of the productive power of the proper execution of the civilizing mission.

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[215] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 11, 1915, p. 9.
[216] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 11, 1915, p. 9.
[217] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 26, 1916, p. 8.
[218] Ibid.

He later expanded his scope to cover agricultural investment's role in the entire country. He appealed to the banks in West Africa in 1918, specifically the Colonial Bank, to increase their investment into "honest native industrial efforts," referring especially to the agricultural sector. He criticized the banks, claiming that instead of helping the Sierra Leoneans, the European banks had opted to help other European firms or Syrian firms. This was a poor investment strategy, he said, given their relative lack of permanence in comparison to Sierra Leonean enterprises. Stronger official investments, he believed, would "set the much-misunderstood Sierra Leonean busy along that line of activity which is the only sure foundation for all other industries."[219]

The Rambler's disappointment with the colonial government's performance further suggests that he should be understood as someone channelling Blyden in many respects. The Rambler appealed time and again to the government for action and highlighted the injustice that would result from its inaction. The white colonial masters were supposed to be just and progressive leaders, but the Rambler continually felt the need to press them to fulfill that role. While he admitted the fault over the lack of agricultural progress was partially the Sierra Leoneans', he thought the British as the civilizing patron bore the lion's share of the responsibility. In terms of both land and money, the Rambler saw a colonial government's refusal to grant either to the Sierra Leonean people, whom the Rambler believed were eager, willing and, in some cases, trained to bring about a revolution in Sierra Leonean agriculture, as a contradiction of its own civilizing mission. He did not expect much from the government beyond financial investment in Sierra Leonean farming and the creation of an ideal environment for its growth, but those tasks, while simple, were key to the Rambler's overall vision of a

[219] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 20, 1918, p. 8.

productive, economically significant, and culturally distinct Sierra Leonean agricultural sector. Their failure, according to him, was instrumental in maintaining the status quo.

3.3 The Exhibitions

Agricultural exhibitions provided agriculturalists with something to rally around. Prize-winning producers could be held up as proof of the viability of the agriculturalists' vision. In terms of a national identity, they can be seen as efforts to display both aspects of the Creole problematic: aspiring Sierra Leonean farmers could prove their own worth within the civilizing mission by fulfilling Blyden's idea that Africans needed to work within nature. The Rambler used the exhibitions to put pressure on both the government and Sierra Leoneans, highlighting them as potential foundational events for positive shifts in Sierra Leonean nationhood. However, the exhibitions failed to properly reflect Sierra Leone's productive potential, primarily due to poor participation stemming from popular scepticism concerning the purpose of the exhibitions. Examining the Rambler's rhetoric concerning the exhibitions can help to further define how he tried to resolve the crisis of identity.

The first exhibition to which he referred was announced in June, 1917, for a date in the following December.[220] Commentators welcomed the event. S.W. Turner, who had been for weeks already publishing agricultural instructional articles in the *Weekly News,* welcomed the exhibition in the *Sierra Leone Guardian*, along with some

[220] J. De Hart, "Agricultural and Horticultural Show – Preliminary Notice," SLWN, June 23, 1917, p. 13. Similar articles appear in other Sierra Leonean papers, such as the Colonial and Provincial Reporter.

recommendations on how to garner greater participation from the natives.[221] A letter to the editor from a resident of Waterloo in the *SLWN* declared that agriculture in that village was "a matter of no significance" and that the exhibition would help to change that.[222] An editorial in the *Colonial and Provincial Reporter* voiced doubts that the timing was proper.[223] It asked if the war in Europe had put such an event out of the price range of ordinary Sierra Leoneans. It also wondered if the Farmers' Association had been consulted over the date and other possible contentious issues.

The Rambler voiced both support and criticism immediately following the exhibition's announcement. He appealed to the exhibition's all-white Official Committee for more public input. He wanted every village and town in both the Colony and Protectorate to be invited to participate, in order to "enlist popular sympathy with the scheme,"[224] despite the original announcement's declaration that such would be the case. Also, he thought that the government should restore to farmers the land which it had recently appropriated and that it should encourage townspeople to follow the Blydeneseque natural inclination of turning to the soil. Finally, he called on the committee "to make the Show a real success" and "make permanent this Government share in a movement which is largely bound up [in] the salvation of a sadly handicapped people."[225] Whether or not he actually expected the committee to follow through with his recommendations is difficult to determine. But his critiques at least made clear what he thought were the government's shortcomings. Doing so minimized the risk to his vision.

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[221] S.D. Turner, "Reminiscence of the Exhibition of 1865," Sierra Leone Guardian, July 20, 1917, p. 4.
[222] J.H. Davies, "Forth-coming Agricultural Show – Headquarters District," SLWN, September 15, 1917, p. 12.
[223] "The Proposed Agricultural and Horticultural Show in Sierra Leone," Colonial and Provincial Reporter, June 20, 1917, pp. 6-7.
[224] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 30, 1917, p. 9.
[225] Ibid.

Had the exhibition failed, he could blame a government that did not invest in public capabilities nor pay enough attention to public desires. Both options left him with the ability to present the agricultural potential of Sierra Leone as he saw fit following its success or failure: either as the logical next step for a development-minded populace, or as evidence that the colonial administration needed to do more to facilitate development.

The exhibition was postponed twice, in mid-October[226] and again in mid-January.[227] The second postponement prompted the Rambler to blame insufficient promotion. Potential exhibitors, he said, had to walk as far as a mile just to get information on participation,[228] despite an announcement from the secretary of the planning committee that said that information would be available from various sources, ranging from the Director of Agriculture to the village headmen in the Colony.[229] The Rambler attempted to leave the public blameless, claiming that "It is a mistake to expect the conservative public to tumble over one another's heads towards the show" and that "The show must reach out to the public and actually coax it into zeal."[230] But he maintained his belief in the show's potential.

An editorial in late September had already pointed to problems with public support. The piece noted that successful exhibits in the past did not originate amongst Sierra Leoneans, but instead from Europeans. It proclaimed that the public "need[ed] greater energy of thought and life for advancement and progress," and appealed to the public's "patriotism" in order to garner greater participation. The piece also made use of the Rambler's motivational tone, placing some responsibility on the public: "Without

[226] "The Agricultural Exhibition," Sierra Leone Guardian, October 19, 1917, p. 5.
[227] S. Renshaw, "Agricultural & Horticultural Show," Sierra Leone Guardian, January 18, 1918, p. 3.
[228] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 26, 1918, p. 8.
[229] S. Renshaw, "Recreation Ground, Brookfields," SLWN, January 5, 1918, p. 5.
[230] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 26, 1918, p. 8.

intending a reprimand," it claimed that "The eventual prosperity of a country must depend upon the well directed effort of the whole Community and not upon the brilliant talents of the few."[231] It put out a general appeal for "generous subscriptions" and requested of all ministers in the country to use their pulpits to support the scheme.[232] The next month, an editorial tied agriculture to the "future of the black man of Sierra Leone and West Africa" and called on "men of all grades" to "make the soil speak, and yield and bless us abundantly."[233]

In late February, the show was postponed indefinitely[234] and the Rambler's explanation brings into question his awareness of the Sierra Leonean agricultural reality. The Rambler admitted that lacklustre advertising was not the sole reason for the postponement.

> "Distrust," I regret to say, is the sad answer. People – especially the country folk, whose habits are more agricultural – had a lurking suspicion that the proposed Show was simply a ruse... to find out the agricultural possibilities of the country with a view to the wholesale ejectment of natives in favour of white immigrants. The commandeering by Government of some native property in the city and the ejectment of peninsular farmers from lands in which they had farmed for generations – facts of but yesterday – must naturally, however erroneously, produce fear and distrust of the present scheme.[235]

This statement preserved several ideas upon which the Rambler had previously relied. First, it countered any accusation of incompetence and laziness against the Sierra Leonean public because the failure of the exhibition under circumstances of "distrust" did not necessarily mean Sierra Leoneans could not produce. Second, it maintained that Sierra Leoneans could and wanted to improve the country's productive capabilities. And,

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[231] "The Proposed Agricultural and Horticultural Show," SLWN, September 29, 1917, p. 9.
[232] Ibid.
[233] "Jala," SLWN, October 13, 1917, p. 8.
[234] Marillia Van, "Random Jottings," SLWN, February 23, 1918, p. 13.
[235] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 9, 1918, p. 12.

finally, it pointed again to the Rambler's criticism of the lack of cooperation from the government, specifically concerning the land issue. His failure to address, or maybe even realize, such a basic reason as a popular suspicion of a colonial ulterior motive for the rejection of the exhibition prior to its cancellation brings into question his ability to properly understand the public discourse. The week earlier, one of his contemporaries, Marillia Van, pointed to public lethargy, along with distrust, as a cause of the exhibition's cancellation, further claiming that the planner's failure to cater to the public risked proving the public desire for agricultural development to be "nothing but bluff."[236] The Rambler's statement attempted to, at least indirectly, counter Van's portrayal of a precarious and problematic potential political program. But West Africans in other settings did not trust British motivations either. During the First World War, Nigerian peasant farmers rejected colonial bodies and farming societies ostensibly designed to better facilitate agricultural development. The farmers felt that the bodies provided another avenue for colonization by establishing greater controls over the Nigerian cocoa industry.[237]

Still, the Rambler did not believe that the popular rejection of the show was so great as to ruin his hopes. In fact, at the opening of the article, he addressed those "who took the Agricultural and Horticultural Show in serious earnest," especially those that had made entries or intended to do so. He spoke of "a young zealot" who had been disappointed by the show's postponement because he had made some palm oil which he felt would earn some sort of prize. The Rambler also spoke of his own efforts, claiming that he had raised a bantam, "Dickey," that he envisioned sporting a first prize ribbon,

[236] Marillia Van, "Random Jottings," SLWN, February 23, 1918, p. 13.
[237] C.E.F. Beer, The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1976): pp. 18-20.

only for the show to fail. By pointing to those examples of well-intended participants, the Rambler suggested that the show did not fail because of a common rejection of it by the public, but instead that a large enough segment of potential participants were suspicious of the event to cripple it.

Regardless, the show failed, alongside other similar ventures. Over the Rambler's early period, government reports concerning official shows revealed that the Agricultural Department was under no illusions over the possible results. The report for the 1916 government show in Waterloo noted that no exhibit of fruit at the entire show was any better than average.[238] In 1917, organizers established minimum standards in order to counter the presentation of "a large amount of rubbish and poor quality produce."[239] The 1918 report on a government show in Bonthe claimed that "the majority of exhibitors" bought or borrowed their showpieces.[240] Along with the absence of any measurement of non-exhibitor attendance, the twenty-five pound minimum allocations of prize money suggest that most participants were merely there under hopes of presenting the least unappealing piece to judges in order to win a cash prize. Furthermore, it suggests that the Rambler's final diagnosis of the failure of the 1918 Freetown show was still yet incomplete: it also failed because Sierra Leoneans had to pay to register and the prize money was not enough to entice them.

How then do we understand the Rambler in relation to the exhibitions? In terms of the Creoles problematic, the exhibitions provided the Rambler with the ability to suggest that Creoles could make progress in the positive aspects of both the British and African

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[238] Annual Report of the Agricultural Department for the Year 1916 (March 31, 1917): p. 4.
[239] Annual Report of the Agricultural Department for the Year 1917 (April 1, 1917): p. 4.
[240] Annual Report of the Agricultural Department for the Year 1918 (March 12, 1919): p. 4. Curiously absent is any speculation over whether or not any exhibits were stolen.

aspects of the identity spectrum at the same time. He thought the exhibitions would prove to both the British and Africans that Sierra Leone could make progress in terms of the British standard of national economic viability by being *more* African, at least in terms of Blyden's supposed African affinity for nature and agriculture. Exhibitions were possible testimonies of Sierra Leone's African industrial potential. At the same time they could disprove the Western notions of African laziness and apathy and showcase to the British just what it was that Sierra Leone had to offer. They were thus a starting point from which the Rambler could try to at least rhetorically resolve the issue of how to create a Sierra Leonean industry that satisfied his desire to see a country that could function within a British imperial framework while maintaining an African style. However, they were ineffective. Sierra Leoneans saw them as either lotteries for prize money or colonial tests of the viability of settlement strategies. The Rambler tried to repackage the exhibitions for his readers, ignoring the often half-hearted or dubious participants and holding back any information on (most likely minimal) non-participant attendance, in order to present them as manifestations of national potential and glowing milestones of agricultural altruism.

3.4 Conclusion

The Rambler's ideas about agriculture help to emphasize his struggle within the Creole problematic. At the core of this part of the struggle was an overly idealized conception of the Creoles and how they felt they should function as a people. For the Rambler, agriculture formed the basis for Sierra Leonean national development, which he

assumed was the desire of both the colonial government, as determined by the civilizing mission, and the people of Sierra Leone, whom he believed were not satisfied by Sierra Leone's dependence on foreign, especially British, imports and wanted greater economic independence. He thought the resources for progress were plentiful and the process fairly simple. He felt the civilizing mission obligated the British to take an active role through education and investment and that the supposed African propensity to agriculture would provide the man-power and motivation. The goal of his developmental agenda was not Sierra Leonean secession from the Empire so much as it was agricultural self-sufficiency. That, he felt, was the end goal of the civilizing mission across the Empire and he pressed the colonial administrators, possible financial investors, and potential Sierra Leonean agriculturalists to come together and build an economic apparatus as a manifestation of both British benevolence and African vitality. But, in the end, his goals never materialized.

The Rambler's ideas reveal a poor understanding of the agricultural realities of the period. The Rambler's conception of agricultural progress completely discarded native methodology. His focus on bodies like the Thomas Agricultural Academy reveals a developmental vision that revolved around Western techniques and concepts, with little consideration for the native traditions. Instead, he presented the protectorate natives as eager students of the civilizing mission, with their acceptance of agricultural development a necessary stage for progress. He never bothered exploring the natives' opinions on, capabilities regarding, or problems with agricultural industry. For instance, Swindell argues that West African natives were unfamiliar with the concept of the British style agricultural economy and were trying to reconcile with an economic system that focused

on the product instead of the labour involved in production.[241] The colonial administration was more concerned with the standardization and regulation of Sierra Leonean products than the labour required to produce them. British conceptions of "disciplined workers" simply did not translate for native Africans in Sierra Leone.[242] Instead, the Rambler provided a simple narrative of supposed native progress that ignored the significant cultural and political obstacles between the native farmers and what he wanted them to become.

The Rambler turned instead to his readers as the focus of change. His message encouraged his readers to make some sort of start on small scale operations for which he projected tremendous long-term potential, both financial and political, and which demanded minimal risks from investors. However, his readers did not follow through. His "we should do it" attitude failed to compete with Creole tastes for imported foods and their refusal to move beyond participation in agricultural societies that met monthly,[243] "launched with a flourish of trumpets" only to be "dropped into oblivion without regret or anxiety" from its members.[244]

This certainly was not a definitive blow to the Rambler's faith in the Creoles and their role as the medium between British and native culture. But it was a substantial failure of it. They were the focal point of his campaign because he believed they were best suited to action and they stood to gain the most from a revolution in Sierra Leonean agriculture. But they refused to change and that brought into jeopardy part of his ideal

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[241] Ken Swindell, "Work, Time and Space: Britain and West Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in Reginald Cline-Cole and Elspeth Robson, eds., West African Worlds (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2005): p. 223.
[242] Ibid., p. 226-227.
[243] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 20, 1917, p. 8.
[244] "Native Agricultural Association," SLWN, November 17, 1917, p. 9.

future. Their refusal certainly affected the way he chose to address Sierra Leonean agriculture. During his second period, he did not discuss it with nearly the same dedication or passion that he did during his first period. His strategy changed as well. While he spoke of exhibitions during the thirties, he did not do so in before they had occurred. He instead reported on them after the fact. Gone from his tone was the certainty with which he anticipated the success of the early supposedly-revolutionary shows, replaced with a muted hope that perhaps the last show might have been the one that would finally allow a Creole interest in agriculture to germinate.

Chapter 4
The Disconnection

This chapter focuses on the Rambler's commentary and reporting on Benito Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. The actual conflict began in October 1935, ending in May 1936. But the Rambler, similar to anti-imperial and pacifist groups around the world, criticized the European diplomatic community, especially the British and the League, during the six months leading up to the invasion. His commentary prior to the Ethiopian crisis held up the British as a global moral authority, one which he insisted the world was lucky to have and on whose side many colonized people were lucky to be, despite its failings. The invasion revealed a different British ruling class, one not entitled to lead the civilizing mission due to its disconnection from what he thought were supposed to be British traditions. The Rambler had other reasons to be critical. During the Depression, Sierra Leoneans experienced higher taxation and received fewer benefits from their government. The effect was seen most strongly in the lower, African-staffed levels of the colonial bureaucracies,[245] especially important to Creoles, which served to bolster their criticisms of the colonial enterprise. Despite a lingering positive outlook by many African activists on some British politicians, such as David Lloyd George,[246] the thirties saw many Africans stop looking beyond their own continent for socio-political leadership, and the idea of the whites as invaders gained further traction.[247] P. Esedebe notes that many West Africans, including a young Kwame Nkrumah, considered the invasion "another rape of the father land."[248]

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[245] John D. Hargreaves, Decolonization in Africa (New York: Longman, 1988): p. 34.
[246] P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, Pan-Africanism: the Idea and Movement, 1776-1991 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994): p. 103.
[247] Robert W. July, The Origins of Modern African Thought (London: Faber and Faber, 1968): p. 19.
[248] Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, p. 99.

According to Asante, the Italian invasion sparked an episode of African nationalist development, and was a "rehearsal" for the Rhodesian crisis of the early 1970s.[249] He further claims that many African commentators across the continent and the Diaspora underwent a similar disillusionment with British colonial rule as a direct result of Britain's performance in the international arena.[250] Those commentators could no longer accept a supposedly Christian colonial moral authority given the West's inaction in Ethiopia.[251] Adi claims that members of the West African Students Union in Britain saw the invasion as another facet of the "common front of European imperialism," and it, along with the Depression, served as another catalyst for radicalization amongst African political organizations.[252] Both see the crisis differently, Asante seeing it as an instance of Pan-African development, while Adi sees growth in Marxist rejection of the imperial project. The Rambler represents a lingering loyalist changing into an outspoken critic of imperial failures, but he was certainly no Marxist.

In international terms, African thinkers saw Ethiopia as the last unconquered African nation, a symbol of hope for a free Africa. A.B.C. Merriman-Labor, a popular Creole intellectual of the early twentieth century, considered the Ethiopians the ancestors of all West Africans, and used the ancient Ethiopian civilization to discredit the ideas of an innate African backwardness and lack of history.[253] Blyden referred to a passage in the Bible that he believed proved that Africa had a special connection to God, which resonated strongly with the Creoles who still considered the Bible the definitive source of

[249] S.K.B. Asante, "The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict: A Case Study in British West African Response to Crisis Diplomacy in the 1930s," The Journal of African History 15, 2 (1974): p. 291.
[250] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p. 2.
[251] Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, p. 103.
[252] Hakim Adi, West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998): pp. 69-70.
[253] Spitzer, Creoles, pp. 130-131.

truth.[254] In 1911, two years before the Rambler emerged, J.E. Casely-Hayford, one of Blyden's intellectual inheritors and an important figure in West African nationalist circles, published *Ethiopia Unbound.* Casely-Hayford made Ethiopia and Africa conceptually inseparable.[255] He redefined Ethiopianism, originally a term used to describe the divergence between European and African churches, as a political theory which claimed that the potential and essential greatness of Africa was focused in its last remaining native empire. He encouraged Africans to take control of their own development.[256] The term remained vague, with nationalists like Kenyatta using a clouded definition as late as 1938.[257] But the crisis gave the definition a popular new meaning, turning it into "a mark of self-assertion against foreign control," a sign of cultural maturity, and a "symbol of freedom and emancipation."[258] The Rambler made use of that concept, but not specifically the term.

This chapter follows how the League of Nations and the British affected the Rambler's loyalty to Western leaders and ideas. Referring back to the idea of the identity spectrum, the crisis caused the Rambler to dismiss Westerners as civilizing guides. The West's failure to follow through on its obligations concerning world peace countered Blyden's definition of whiteness, which identified whites with justice and progress. The death of his love for the Empire was not unique and his position aligned with some of the trends of African protests, especially the sanctity of Ethiopia and the desire to find figures

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[254] For Blyden's reference, see Robert W. July, "Nineteenth-Century Negritude," p. 80. The Bible verse is Psalm 68: 31. "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." For reference to the Creole belief in the infallibility of scripture, see Spitzer, Creoles, p. 136.
[255] F. Nnabuenyi Ugonna, foreword to Ethiopia Unbound, by J.E. Casely Hayford (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1969): p. xxiii.
[256] Casely-Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1969): p. xxvi. For the evolution of the definition of Ethiopianism, see George Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism," Phylon 14, 1 (1st quarter, 1953): p. 10.
[257] Shepperson, "Ethiopianism," p. 9.
[258] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p. 12.

within the British diplomatic arena who could counter the idea that the League had become irredeemable. The Rambler aligned himself with three themes maintained within the African anti-imperialist opposition to the crisis. First, he believed that the imperial powers had committed a mortal moral failure. Second, he decried the invasion as a racially-driven violation of an innocent and glorious symbol of African greatness. And thirdly, he saw fascism as an imminent threat to world peace, focussing mostly on possible threats to Africa. This was a critical moment in terms of the Rambler's position within the crisis of Creole cultural self confidence described by Spitzer. The crisis forced the redefinition of what it meant to be British, and further, a member of Western civilization. This chapter asks how the Rambler handled that redefinition.

4.1 The World Powers and Their Failure

Asante claims that the Ethiopian Crisis signifies a moment of increased political awareness, especially in West Africa.[259] That awareness did not emerge from a vacuum: African observers were already sceptical of the League's handling of slavery issues in Liberia, believing that the League was attacking Liberian slavery while leaving Belgian, South African and Portuguese slavery alone because of racial prejudice.[260] The Rambler certainly reflected a similar awareness of the political and legal realities of the League: he also criticized the League's inconsistency in combating the Liberian slave trade, expecting greater consistency with its more lax treatment of Abyssinia's problems.[261] But, along with the British, he saw the League as a dispenser of Western justice. It

[259] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p.2.
[260] Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, p. 96.
[261] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 7, 1932, p. 9.

carried tremendous significance for him because it was a legal entity designed to level the playing field and establish equality amongst all nations. This section asks why and how the Rambler came to finally dismiss the League of Nations and members of the West beyond Britain.

In March of 1935, after Mussolini sent five thousand troops to East Africa, the Rambler turned to the World Powers to prevent "a repetition of armaggedon," because he felt they were best equipped to put limits on Italian ambitions. Rambler saw Italy "nursing an old grudge" over its defeat in the first Italian invasion of Ethiopia from a generation earlier, articulating a popular conception later repeated by the *Weekly News*.[262] His understanding of history granted him confidence in Ethiopia's military capabilities and he thought Italy risked another defeat in any aggression against Ethiopia.[263] But he still believed that the League had to act. [264] He thought that if the League could avert a war it could gain some solid legitimacy amongst yet sceptical nations, pointing to the Egyptians who were still considering joining the League.

The *SLWN* did not share the Rambler's hopes. In July of 1935, it portrayed Britain and France, Britain especially, as being diffident in the face of an increasingly ornery Italy despite a lack of sympathy with Italy amongst European nations.[265] The *Weekly News* further reported that Mussolini gave Great Britain and France "a positive announcement of 'hands off.'" It also pointed to an Italian disruption of a League Commission which resulted in the Commission's "indefinite postponement."[266] The *SLWN* first presented the League Council stalling over fixing a date at which it might

[262] "The Italo-Abyssinian Situation: Imminent Opening of Hostilities," SLWN, July 13, 1935, p. 9.
[263] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, March 2, 1935, p. 5.
[264] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 13, 1935, p. 5.
[265] "The Italo-Abyssinian Situation: Imminent Opening of Hostilities," SLWN, July 13, 1935, p. 9.
[266] Ibid.

have appointed a Committee "to report on all aspects of the affair."[267] The paper later concluded that the League could only exist as "an international bureau to collect statistics": "as an association of nations to establish right and peace on a basis of justice and law," it was "doomed."[268] By late September, the *SLWN* predicted "the funeral obsequies of the League of Nations and the Peace of the World."[269]

Observers noted that the law as set forth by the League countered every claim to Italian legitimacy, regardless of the state of affairs in Ethiopia.[270] But the League itself made slow and ineffective efforts at enforcing its own laws. Italy dismissed the League's claim that the dispute was over on September 3 and planned to take the matter into its own hands. The League's own laws required all members to sever economic ties as a result. However, members took until November to produce a list of five proposals for sanctions, none of which included sanctions on oil and other materials key to the Italian war machine.

The *SLWN* reprinted sections of the League Covenant that explicitly required that sanctions be brought against Italy because of its violation of the Covenant.[271] However, it also noted that the League's council members prevented sanctions in lieu of consensus.

> But in the case of the Italo-Abyssinian Dispute, the League has waited for bloodshed and open war, and even... has not decided on what sanctions to apply. In the Council... by declarations of the representatives of Austria and Hungary, we find that unanimous action is impossible. Owing to age long friendship and financial reasons, it will be impracticable for these small states to attack Italy in any form.[272]

Thus, it was to money and Europe-centered politics that the *SLWN* attributed the

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[267] "Fixing Date of League Council," SLWN, August 17, 1935, p. 4.
[268] "Mr. Lloyd George and Abyssinia; 'League is in Dire Peril,'" SLWN, October 5, 1935, p. 5.
[269] "Abyssinia or Ethiopia; The Present Crisis," SLWN, September 28, 1935, p. 5.
[270] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p. 67.
[271] Specifically Articles 12, 13 and 15, which outlined the arbitration process between hostile nations.
[272] "Prevention is Better than Cure," SLWN, October 12, 1935, p. 8.

League's failure to function as a preventative agent in the invasion.[273] And rightly so: leading diplomats were nervous to discuss oil sanctions openly for fear of how Mussolini might react. Those with an eye on Hitler were nervous that it would drive the two dictators closer together.[274]

The *Weekly News* criticized the Great Powers' refusal to make their intentions explicit. It attacked the French for bestowing the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour upon the Italian Minister for War. It also reported that Britain would not take "singular action," which discouraged supporters of Ethiopia. The author also targeted the United States for signing a neutrality bill that left nearly completely undefined its position regarding the whole affair. The editorial appealed to "honesty and fairplay" in an attempt to remind its readers that the Great Powers, the British especially, were failing to live up to the moral standard they established for themselves.[275] It also claimed that the League had "not kept Mussolini back one second" and that its one visible accomplishment was that it "had prevented Abyssinia from buying any munitions to defend her liberty."[276]

For his part, the Rambler believed in the potential of the international public. He called on all blacks to put whatever pressure they could on international public opinion.[277] He pointed to the formation of societies in Europe, America, and Asia -- the "Friends of Ethiopia" -- organized to bring public pressure on the Great Powers. "Good and true men and women, unwilling to accept the triumph of Wrong over Right" made up the groups and they kept the League of Nations from setting "a seal upon Mussolini's infamous deed." The Rambler viewed their protests as "clear indication[s] that the world

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[273] Ibid., p. 9.
[274] Frank Hardie, The Abyssinian Crisis (London: B.T.Batsford Ltd., 1974): pp. 164, 169.
[275] "The Need of Plain Speaking at Geneva," SLWN, September 7, 1935, p. 8.
[276] "Delay at Geneva; Mr. Lloyd George's Charges," SLWN, October 12, 1935, p. 8.
[277] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 11, 1936, p. 8.

still abides by the moral code."[278] He even perceived an Italian public that had "not the slightest sympathy for the Duce in his wild cat project."[279] But he overestimated the potential of any public opposition to the invasion, even within Sierra Leone's borders. Recruitment to the volunteer Ethiopian defence force was lightest in Sierra Leone amongst British West African countries. Creoles cited their families and careers as reasons why they could not go to fight for Abyssinia. The Sierra Leonean branch of the NCBWA excused itself from making contributions to the defence force.[280]

The Rambler continued his emotional attacks despite a lack of corresponding passion from Sierra Leoneans. After Armistice Day in 1935, the Rambler wondered what the significance of the day even was anymore. He felt that celebration of the day was "inconsistent" and "insincere" in the face of the "supreme sacrifice" that the world made during the First World War which had evidently not been enough to rid the world of war: "all the sacrifice has been in vain and the mailed fist is to-day as serious a menace to the peace of humanity as ever it was in 1914." Italy especially made a "mockery" of Armistice Day and brought the Golden Age, of which the original Armistice Day was the dawn, to a bitter and cynical end. News came from the League that the sanctions possibly allowed outside logistical suppliers to continue fulfilling contracts with Italy signed before the sanctions were put in place. "No wonder the Fascists laugh at Geneva" said the Rambler: "Let the League of Nations have a care that it does not insult the conscience of the world by putting that contract stunt through."[281]

As for other West African commentators, they thought that the British and French

[278] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 24, 1937, p. 8.
[279] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 13, 1935, p. 5.
[280] Asante, Pan-African Protests, pp. 138, 155.
[281] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 23, 1935, p. 5.

placed their own Europe-centred agendas, focused around Nazi Germany, before their obligations to the League. A column by George Padmore accused the French of giving in to Italy's demands in order to secure support against Germany, further calling the League a farce. [282] The *Gold Coast Independent*'s (GCI) editor claimed that Britain would not take action until Austria was threatened.[283] The *Nigerian Daily Times* (NDT) reported as early as July 1935 that Britain was considering appeasement.[284]

Appeasement came in form of the Hoare-Laval plan, agreed upon by the British Foreign Secretary and the French Prime minister in December, 1935. The plan divided Ethiopia into three zones of control. Mussolini stood to gain complete control of two areas, in the north and southeast, amounting to a quarter of Ethiopia's territory, and economic control of the rest of the southern half of the country, essentially cutting Ethiopia in half and giving Mussolini the prime land. The plans outraged the British public, who viewed it as immoral,[285] and the Foreign Minister was forced to resign.

The Rambler responded to the debacle by wondering if either nation had "any sense of honesty left in [their] Souls." He declared that Britain and France had used their "virtues" of British justice and French fairplay to drug the world so that Italy could "take as much of the black man's land" as possible.[286] He rather would have seen some honesty from the Great Powers, who could have said "Hands off, only two in the Ring," rather than the "canting peace-making" they instead exhibited.[287] The Rambler later accused the League of deliberately failing to carry out sanctions to avoid "fall[ing] foul of the Italian

[282] George Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," GCI, June 1, 1935, p. 506.
[283] "The Italo-Abyssinian Dispute," GCI, July 6, 1935, p. 636.
[284] "Britain and Abyssinian Questions," NDT, July 10, 1935, p. 1.
[285] Hardie, The Abyssinian Crisis, p. 172.
[286] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 11, 1936, p. 8.
[287] Ibid., p. 9.

bully." The promoters of the International Arbitration Concern, he felt, should have "shut up shop" for their failure to come to Ethiopia's rescue. Britain and France's failure, he said, was undeniable.[288] Outside of that, there was only hope that the Conquering Lion of Judah would prevail against the "cowardly" Italian bombers, whose use Italy maintained "thanks to the League" and its refusal to enact a sanction on petrol.[289]

The Rambler assigned guilt over the crisis to the international community. The slow and ineffective application of sanctions proved to him to be the League's most frustrating failure. He celebrated the news of sanctions at first,[290] but only a week later wondered if the desired affect would even come to fruition considering Mussolini's pace. His faith in them evaporated in January.

> Sanctions still go their slow, tortoise way in the race with the hare-footed vandalism of Italian aggression. But whether they will overtake their rival in the handicap and make the drama end as happily as it did in the fable, it does not yet appear from any desire Mussolini has shown to take a nap in the path of victory he has fondly sketched out for himself. And that shows how little the application of mere economic sanctions has affected the would-be conqueror.

He accused the League's leaders of "criminal" passivity in refusing to pass or enforce strong sanctions against Italy.[291]

The Rambler increased his attacks on the League at the end of the war in 1936, by which time he had completely lost faith in the League as a concept.

> The League of European Brotherhood, miscalled "League of Nations," is dying – let it die! Its seventeen years of existence have been seventeen years of stagnation and insincerity, such as a sickly world has never seen before and never cares to see again.

He changed his mind on his earlier appeals to the ideals that he claimed were inherent in

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[288] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, February 22, 1936, p. 8.
[289] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 11, 1936, p. 8.
[290] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 19, 1935, p. 8.
[291] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, January 11, 1935, p. 8.

the League, declaring that he "never had much faith" in it from the start. He termed it "a child born bad," and it was the birth that gave him his doubts about its use for non-whites. He claimed that Woodrow Wilson, "its father," disowned the organization. "Thoughtful black folks," he claimed, dismissed the "bastard child," politically crippled by the Monroe Doctrine.[292] He called the failure of the League the death of "innumerable Western hopes for a better and saner organisation of Western civilisation itself," the flames consuming Addis Ababa their funeral pyre.[293] He accused the members of the League of letting the Italian "medicine man," who claimed to have a "secret" that would enable him to annihilate "whole armies and navies in a moment," frighten them away from their own obligations.[294]

But his categorizations began to change in his overall presentation of the parties involved. Instead of explicit mention of the British, French and Italians, he made reference to the West and the League as representative of all of the European Great Powers.

> A tradition and a culture which managed to maintain their independence through a two thousand years' history have been ground down as remorselessly as all others beneath the ambitious power of the West. Threatened by one great European Power, Abyssinia was invited by other Powers to resistance, which the West would take no risks to make effective and the end is ruin and demoralisation more complete than if resistance had never been made.

Thus Ethiopia was the victim of Western attempts to enact a balance of power. The League, for the Rambler, exposed itself "as a brute business of force, violence and bloody

[292] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 9, 1936, p. 5.
[293] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 30, 1936, p. 8.
[294] Ibid. Africans, according to the Rambler, understood it immediately as the sort of fear-mongering a medicine man would bring against his audience, which was why the Ethiopians fought Italy's supposed magic weapon with regulation weapons, "not with juju."

egotism."[295] After "the League of Cowards" lifted the meagre sanctions that it did bring against Italy, he called it an "international farce." That the League had "practically confessed itself at fault and admitted that Italy had a perfect right to murder black people and seize their country" outraged the Rambler. Of the members he said "Cowardice with a dead conscience is capable of any low down act."[296]

The *SLWN* also addressed the Western powers, including Germany, as a body within the context of the League of Nations that could afford to ignore the obligations assigned to them through membership. One piece reduced international politics to a dichotomy; subject races and the dominant race. But the Rambler was not so blunt. He tried, within the racial dichotomy, to make a distinction within the white community between leaders and led, implying that the leaders were most to blame.[297] Still he noted white figures that did not fit the model. In June of 1937, when Egypt applied for membership in the League, the discussion of its application featured a statement from the Polish delegate noting that the League had failed to recognise the annexation of Ethiopia by Italy. The delegate went on to say, according to the Rambler, that his government had no interest in the Ethiopian situation, but that it was "concerned exclusively with the future of the international collaboration within the framework of the League,"[298] which the Rambler understood as a depraved attempt to finalize the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. The Mexican delegate opposed Poland's attempt to "prepare the way for the exclusion of a representative of a member of the League," to which the Rambler responded "Thank

[295] Ibid.
[296] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 11, 1936, p. 8.
[297] "Germany and Colonies; the Key to the Peace of Europe," SLWN, May 30, 1936, p. 8.
[298] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 19, 1937, p. 9.

God there are still some honest folk among the white races."[299]

The Rambler rejected the League and the West because of the crisis. The League's failures helped to disconnect him from the appeal of a West that had promised self-determination to Africa almost twenty years earlier. The crisis revealed to the Rambler that the League was a lost cause because its designers wilfully discarded the moral basis for its creation in the face of the very issue it was meant to prevent: international aggression and conflict. For him, Europe forgot the lessons of the First World War, both in terms of the destructive capability of mankind as well as the potential of peace through unity. The imperial nature of the aggression and its racial aspect added insult to injury and the racial aspect of the League's failure came to inform the Rambler's understanding of global realpolitik. The League of Nations, the former pinnacle of Europe's wisdom, became the face of European duplicity. This marked the death of his belief in the morality of a now-meaningless civilizing mission and left him ready for the Sierra Leonean Youth League's self-assertive, boldly aggressive, and fundamental criticisms of the Empire.

4.2 The British Failure

The Rambler misunderstood the British. He chose to believe in a false political reality, one in which the British could still perform as international arbiters of justice. In them he saw the best chance for the fruition of the civilizing mission and the Italian crisis was a direct attack upon it. If the British failed to live up to their own moral standards, the Creoles would have to re-evaluate their position between a faulty "civilizing" power

[299] Ibid.

and the natives that they themselves believed needed to be civilized. British political realities were far enough removed from Sierra Leoneans that the Rambler and others fell victim to symbolism, sentimental projections, and interpretation when discussing British actions or lack thereof. Certainly, the *Weekly News* had some reliable access to politics in Britain, but both it and the Rambler were not innocent of misinterpreting British political realities. The Rambler looked to the British public to confirm what he thought should be there by virtue of a supposed British affinity for justice: a firm, popular rejection of Italy's attack and the action necessary to prevent it. But the British public did not do much more than sympathize with Ethiopia. The Rambler steadily came to realize that he misplaced his hopes in the British left wing. This section examines how he progressed through that realization and how it brought some resolution to Spitzer's crisis for the Rambler.

Both the Rambler and the *SLWN* turned to former prime minister David Lloyd-George. For the Rambler especially, Lloyd-George personified a proper British vein of thinking which understood Britain as a proper and capable arbiter of international justice and dispenser of civilization. But the Rambler failed to understand that Lloyd-George, then a mere member of the House, was armed only with considerable sentimental strength and no real legal power. His Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction resonated strongly with the self-determination that the Rambler felt had been promised to those under colonial rule in the Treaty of Versailles. The Rambler and the *Weekly News* referenced him often, offering him as a man who fit their conception of proper British

sensibility in order to counter the image of the British government encouraging British subjects within Ethiopia to leave the country.[300]

The *SLWN* reproduced parts of a speech by Lloyd George in which he tied the League and world peace together. He criticized the "talking and talking and talking" on the part of the French, especially Prime Minister Laval, whom he said had been playing for time so as to avoid "a definite decision." He attributed the League's "hesitancy" to his belief that no one had any contingencies planned in case of a diplomatic breakdown and he accused the side of "peace and justice" of being the side of delays. Lloyd George also criticized his own government, saying that their delays brought into question their commitment to fair play, justice and righteousness. He acknowledged the likelihood that Abyssinia's freedom was doomed.[301] The *Weekly News* also quoted him making charges against the British Parliament and calling the League useless from the start, pointing to its failures to prevent both Japanese aggression in China and global arms growth. Lloyd-George saw the world "going at an accelerated pace towards ruin."[302]

The Rambler wanted to see some glimmer of hope within the British political sphere and he found it in Lloyd George. He believed that Lloyd George would satisfy Africans who wanted a speedier sanctioning process. His references to Lloyd George made clear connections to conceptions of British greatness from the First World War.

> For this reason I could wish that the Council of Action were in power and Mr. Lloyd George premier once again. He would soon bring Mussolini to his senses as he did the Kaiser twenty years ago.

The Rambler called Lloyd George "a man of liberal views" and "a champion of the

[300] "Fixing Date of League Council," SLWN, August 17, 1935, p. 4.
[301] "Mr. Lloyd George and Abyssinia; 'League is in Dire Peril'," SLWN, October 5, 1935, p. 5.
[302] "Delay at Geneva; Mr. Lloyd George's Charges," SLWN, October 12, 1935, p. 8.

underdog."[303] Lloyd George, he believed, was the proper man to lead the nation because of his supposed appreciation of "the things that make for [Britain's] honour" and that he would have saved the African race and the peace of the world "as he did [for] Belgium, France and civilisation 18 years ago."[304] For the Rambler, Lloyd George represented an ideal British leader capable of bringing about international peace and progress. He put so much faith in Lloyd George that he was willing to dismiss as "thoughtless but innocent" comments Lloyd George made about "push bikes for West Coast niggers."[305] He hoped the Labour Party, along with Lloyd George, would return to power because of their promises of African self-government and free trade – "blessings worth having."[306] Labour, he claimed would be progressive, so long as it could rid itself of the "nampy-pamby, goody-goody folk, who hold it more Christian to let a bully have his way than to punch him for his dastardly conduct,"[307] and that, should it regain power, it would follow through with sanctions against Italy.[308]

But the Rambler, and further the *SLWN*, did not have a proper understanding of Lloyd-George's position. While his moral objections resonated with the civilizing mission's demands on Britain, the Rambler's hopes for him were unrealistic. While solidly lodged in his own riding, Lloyd George had little hope of retaking political power. His influence in London was primarily rhetorical, limited to whatever altruism he could garner from other members of parliament through his Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction. The Council, despite its symbolic significance and members of various

[303] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 2, 1935, p. 8.
[304] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 9, 1936, p. 5.
[305] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, November 2, 1935, p. 8.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.
[308] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 19, 1935, p. 4.

political weights, was a non-starter, a refuge for non-conformists.[309] Party discipline amongst the dominant Tories did not allow for much deviation from the party line by sympathetic MPs. Reduced to a political "guerrilla," Lloyd-George was both free within and limited to the political fringe.[310] While privately he called the crisis the "greatest outrage on decency and fairplay[sic] ever perpetrated by a British Govt[sic],"[311] there was little he could hope to accomplish of any political relevance. While his appeals did garner mention in other West African papers, some like the *Gold Coast Independent* portrayed his goals as attractive, but ultimately too lofty.[312]

The Labour Party itself received a mixed reception in the *Weekly News*. According to the *SLWN*, the timid diplomatic strategy of the Great Powers, especially Britain, failed to inspire any African confidence.[313] Herbert Morrison, a Labour Party politician, suggested that the Crown Colonies should be handed over to the League. The editor criticized Morrison's exclusive European focus.

> The history of the Crown Colonies would reveal to men of Mr. Morrison's Party and other responsible officials in the Government and Opposition, the fact, that, *cessions*, are not synonymous with *conquest*, and that human beings are not chattels and utensils to be disposed of along with raw materials, whatever may be the dire need of Europe.[314]

The editor took the Secretary of State's repudiation of Morrison's idea as "a relief" and greeted the Secretary's rejection not just as an affirmation of Sierra Leone's place within

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[309] Stephen Koss, "Lloyd George and Nonconformity: the Last Rally," English Historical Review 89, 350 (January, 1974): p. 78
[310] Malcolm Thomson, David Lloyd George, The Official Biography (London: Hutchinson, 1948): p. 429.
[311] Kenneth O. Morgan, ed. Lloyd-George Family Letters, 1885-1936 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972): p. 211.
[312] British Official Wireless Press, "Mr. Lloyd George's "New Deal" Campaign," GCI, January 26, 1935, p. 96.
[313] "The Italo-Abyssinian Situation," SLWN, July 20, 1935, p. 9.
[314] "League Principles," SLWN, November 2, 1935, p. 8, emphasis in original.

the Empire, but as a rejection of the belief that Europe had the sole right to determine the future of the rest of the world. But Labour still offered no help for Ethiopia.

By the end of the war in Ethiopia, the Rambler despaired at Britain's leadership. All Africa, he said, looked to England to save Ethiopia because of the "traditional" imagery of Britain as an international champion. But it was England's leaders – "the worst the country has had for a long time" – that prevented her from "doing her duty."[315] The week after his attack upon the "worst" leaders of Britain, he repeated himself claiming that "Never before has the British Barque of State been navigated by such a sorry batch of crew." However, he felt that there were "still many great souls in that great country," evidenced by a previous unanimous vote to maintain the sanctions against Italy. Rather than the British leaders, the Rambler put his faith in the British public, whom he believed could "replace the Government with a Cabinet of righteous and manly statesmen."[316]

In reality, the Labour Party's focus was domestic and its use for the Empire went against the Rambler's hopes. Members of the party had little to no expertise on colonial matters.[317] Like Morrison, some members were willing to make colonial concessions to Germany in exchange for peace.[318] Initially, the Rambler thought that Labour would make a good ally for African interests,[319] but after the Ethiopian crisis he developed a fuller appreciation for Labour's shortcomings. Just before Christmas of 1938, the Rambler celebrated an assurance from the British government that it would not surrender

[315] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 9, 1936, p. 5.
[316] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 16, 1935, p. 5.
[317] Partha Sarathi Gupta, Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964 (London: Sage, 2002): p. 224.
[318] Ibid., p. 236.
[319] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 19, 1935, p. 4.

any British colonies or mandates over to a fascist power in order to secure peace. The Rambler found it surprising that the Conservatives made the promise rather than the Labour Party, the traditional British source of "loud shrieks against imperialism and exploitation of coloured peoples." Given recent motions from Labour towards appeasement, in the form of plans to redistribute colonies through the League, he said of the party "Well might every African say ... 'Save us from our *Friends*!'" But, for him, part of the offense was that the party was willing to dismember the Empire, a betrayal he considered politically "suicidal."[320] After George Lansbury, the British Labour politician and pacifist, made his trip to Germany to secure a promise of peace from the Fuhrer, the Rambler called Lansbury's zeal hypocritical, noting that Lansbury had done nothing to prevent war in Ethiopia. He took solace in the European political left's rejection of Lansbury's actions, exemplified by Lansbury's isolation by Labour International which again allowed the Rambler to point to incompetent leaders as the root cause of Britain's failure in East Africa.[321] As for the Tories, any appeal for attention to the will of British imperial subjects had to contend with a Conservative focus on increasing tensions in Europe and re-electability. Conservative leaders worried that any movements against Mussolini risked Hitler's involvement. [322] Though the Hoare-Laval agreement revealed to the Tories that the British public did not want to see them leave Ethiopia to the Italians,[323] sanctions provided a middle ground: They satisfied enough British voters to maintain Tory electability and maintained their greater Hitler-centered agenda. And it was that

[320] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, December 10, 1938, p. 5.
[321] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 12, 1937, p. 9.
[322] Winston Churchill, "The Gathering Storm – Sanctions Against Italy," in Ludwig F. Schaefer's The Ethiopian Crisis (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1961): pp. 22-25. Also see George W. Baer, Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1976): p. 6.
[323] Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, p. 101.

behaviour which gave the Rambler cause to call them the worst.

British diplomats were trying to turn Mussolini and Hitler against each other with help from the French. The Ethiopian issue was not a primary concern and, in any case, they held no consensus on what to do.[324] The British did not have French support in action against the Italians and British leaders would not consider any action without it. Others saw intervention as impractical, considering the strategic necessity of an increasingly nationalist Egypt, which risked creating more problems for British forces.[325] Mussolini exploited the divide anywhere he could,[326] fuelled by an awareness that there was some British political support for Italian expansion in Africa.[327] By June of 1935, Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, understood, disapprovingly, that an Italian attack on Abyssinia would be successful, that the League's leadership would allow it, and that the League would not survive the crisis.[328] Neither the Rambler nor his editor made many concessions to European considerations. For the Rambler especially, the Great Powers' moral obligations, as the world's civilizers, overrode those separate agendas.

Coloured groups around the world viewed the attack on Ethiopia as a racial one.[329] The Rambler increasingly made use of that framework, declaring that the League could only mean nothing to coloured nations after the East African crisis was over and that they would "have to form a league of their own, for they have almost lost faith in

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[324] R.J.Q. Adams, British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement 1935-39 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993): pp. 20-21.
[325] Gaines Post, Jr., Dilemmas of Appeasement (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): p. 100.
[326] Post, p. 85.
[327] Adams, p. 24.
[328] Asante, Pan-African, p. 25.
[329] Ibid., p. 43.

Geneva."[330] The Rambler called on all black communities in the Empire to adopt the same resolution in order to let the white races know that "the black race will not take this injustice lying down,"[331] making Britain a stand-in for whites worldwide. But the Rambler did not view the Ethiopian crisis as an affirmation of the Black race. Instead he saw it as a failure of the white race and its supposed morality, declaring that the "subject races" were watching, waiting to see what they should make of the League.[332] For example, he supported a group of Gold Coast ex-servicemen who declared that they would not serve in a white-on-white fight anywhere after the League's betrayal of Ethiopia.[333] For the Rambler, the black race was both an innocent victim and a discarded ally of the British.

As to the affect of the crisis on the Rambler's concept of race, he did not see the British failure to fulfil its moral obligations as a rallying point for Africans and the African diaspora within the greater context of nationalism and independence so much as he saw it as proof that the African race was finally free to determine its own morality. Previously, for Creoles, that morality had been a white one. Instead, though, of dismissing that morality as a white construct, he chose to appropriate it and turn the language of fairness and justice back against the whites in Britain. Doing so helped to change his Creole problematic. The Rambler thought the civilizing mission's rationale was the spread of justice and fair play from Britain to the rest of the world, which needed saving from despotism and lawlessness. The Ethiopian crisis saw the British give up the League's laws, which they had helped to write, in an effort to appease a despot. The

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[330] Ibid.
[331] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 11, 1936, p. 8.
[332] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 13, 1935, p. 5.
[333] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 11, 1936, p. 8.

Rambler saw a Britain fully understanding the obligations it had in the crisis, but refusing to follow through on any of them. British "justice and fairplay" exerted perhaps the strongest attraction to the British end of the Creole spectrum on the Rambler over his career. But the solidarity he perceived in African reactions against British policy suggested to him that Africans, especially Creoles due to their historic familiarity with it, could command British morality without the British. In short, the crisis showed the Rambler that he had outgrown the need for British masters of morality.

After Ethiopia's defeat, the Rambler's commentary concerning the British continued to focus on the public rejection of Britain's abandonment of Ethiopia. At the end of May, 1936, under the header "Honest Men's Verdict," the Rambler quoted a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* whose author considered the League to be just as useless as the Rambler did, noting that it could only be effective at preserving peace "by going, or being ready to go, to war." Also similar to the Rambler, the writer spoke of the increasing likelihood that the peoples of the world would not continue "to bow down to the mammon of unenlightened self-interest" enacted by the League. By presenting to his readers an image of popular British rejection of the performance of the League, the Rambler continued to attempt to limit the British failure to the leaders, allowing for the maintenance of British ideals as well as faith in the will of the British public.[334]

A year after the crisis ended, the Rambler pointed to the ideas of A. L. Kennedy, the former assistant foreign editor of the *Times,* about tensions in Europe. Kennedy wondered if Britain could offer Sierra Leone and the Gambia to Germany in order to appease Hitler. The Rambler held up the Ethiopian betrayal and Kennedy's willingness to bargain with Germany using "subject coloured people" as leverage as evidence that

[334] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, May 30, 1936, p. 8.

Sierra Leoneans needed to consider that they could suffer the same fate.[335] The abandonment of Ethiopia suggested to the Rambler that African people, the Creoles included, were still chattel to the whites. He hoped that Sierra Leoneans would remember the fate of their "kinsmen on the other side of the Desert," making the same ties between Sierra Leoneans and that Merriman-Labor made thirty years earlier.

The Rambler's final position on the British leadership was that they had lost their usefulness to him as world leaders. Africans could no longer measure their own progress by British standards because Britain had failed so badly in the execution of the duties the Rambler thought were integral to world leadership. The whole myth of British altruism had lost its appeal, with incompetence, corruption, and oppression found in the Governors' offices in the colonies, and cowardice, hypocrisy, and racism evident in London. It was only the British public that the Rambler considered to any extent trustworthy. Meanwhile, the WAYL and Wallace-Johnson attacked the colonial structure at its point of contact with the colonized and youth movements proved very capable of aligning themselves with the protest against the Ethiopian crisis.[336]

4.3 Conclusion

The Rambler had three distinct motivations to comment on the Ethiopian crisis. First, the Rambler spoke out because the West failed in two ways: the League failed to meet its legal obligations while Britain failed to meet the Rambler's moral expectations. The Rambler fully understood that the purpose of the League was to maintain peace but

[335] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 24, 1937, p. 8.
[336] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p. 99.

the delays, the clique politics, the frustrated lower-tier members, and the Europe-centered agendas all ultimately represented to him the League's failure to do so and the death of Europe's right to civilize anyone. The Rambler desperately wanted to redeem Britain because it had provided a moral standard for most of his career. That moral standard was collapsing before his very eyes. Without it, the Rambler had to answer a question that struck at the very heart of the Creole problematic: What good were Black Englishmen to the future of Africa if England was a threat to stability in Africa? Appropriating that moral standard was a good option for maintaining any worth in a culture that amalgamated some aspects of British and African culture in an African country. The voters and Lloyd George represented, for him, the last hopes of victory for the Empire's altruism, and their opposition to the Hoare-Laval plan legitimized his faith.[337] However, the British leaders saw the world differently than he did and even had his criticisms reached them, they still would have pursued their own Europe-centered policies.

Many British West African nationalists lost faith in Western Christendom as a result of the crisis, especially the Catholic church in light of the Pope's supposed inaction against the Italian invasion. [338] But the Rambler did not make a similar use of religion unless it was to provide more weight as to why he thought Britain needed to be less timid. While other West Africans, already expecting the colonial authorities to justify their failures as results of the Depression,[339] portrayed the crisis as evidence of *continued* European aggression and incompetence, the Rambler resisted vilifying the whole of

[337] Esedebe, Pan-Africanism, p. 101.
[338] Moses N. Moore, Orishatukeh Faduma, Liberal Theology and Evangelical Pan-Africanism, 1857-1946 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996): p. 231. Also see S.K.B. Asante, "The Catholic Missions, British West African Nationalists and the Italian Invasion of Ethiopia, 1935-1936," African Affairs 73, 291 (April, 1974): p. 206.
[339] Hargreaves, Decolonization, p. 38.

Europe, focusing instead on the leadership as the source of the failure. While British imperialists were aware of the African nationalists' growing threat to the Empire's cohesion,[340] the Rambler did not preach the dissolution of the Empire. Instead, he portrayed failures that needed to be remedied.

The Rambler's second motivation was the violation of Ethiopia. Ethiopia, within the Creole discourse of the late nineteenth century, had come to embody the African ideal. West Africans took great interest in the racial context surrounding Ethiopia because race, as a social concept, began to carry obligations with it.[341] In light of the threat to Ethiopia, the Rambler's rhetoric partially reflected the framework set forth by men like Merriman-Labor and Casely-Hayford: It prompted him to speak not as a Creole, a member of a distinct and superior community apart from the rest of Africa, but as a citizen of a black country within the greater African community. He said it fell to all Sierra Leoneans, not just Creoles, to act as the "conscience of the world," referencing a distinctly Blydenesque idea about innate African spirituality and peacefulness.[342] But he confined that capability to the Sierra Leoneans: it was their duty as members of a leading black community. That claim put Blyden's idea at the fore of it, but in reality, he had been trying to fulfil that role since the crisis first arose. Whereas at the beginning of the crisis he did so as a British subject and a believer in the possibilities of the ideal West, at the end he was doing it as an African. He drew some optimism from the crisis, claiming that "dark-skinned people" had never seen such a "united front." "Religious differences and prejudices, political demarcations and geographical distance" were all overcome by

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[340] Barbara Bush, Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945 (New York: Routledge, 1999): p. 257.
[341] Asante, Pan-African Protest, p. 33.
[342] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 24, 1937, p. 8. Also see Van Hensbroek, Political Discourses, p. 47, for Blyden's ideas innate African traits.

their common interest in Ethiopia's victory.[343]

The third motivation was fascism's violations. But he did not dwell too often on them, and instead focussed on the failures of the British to meet his standards and the importance of Ethiopia as an innocent symbol of Africanness. Had Mussolini instead attacked another nation outside of Africa, the Rambler would have condemned the action as an isolated resurgence of bald imperialism. But the African target combined with facetious European diplomacy made the Italian fascists much more potent villains for the Rambler.

What affect then did the Ethiopian crisis have on the Rambler? Asante claims that Britain's failure in the crisis turned it into a villain in the eyes of African nationalists.[344] But the Rambler did not reject the Empire in its entirety. He resisted condemning all of Britain and instead rejected the British leadership. This certainly was not a nationalist moment for the Rambler: He did not exploit the crisis to make a push for Sierra Leonean independence. Not until the advent of the Youth League did he move in that direction. The Ethiopian crisis represented, for the Rambler, the ultimate failure of the British in the civilizing mission and imperial project. He perceived a League that saw Africa as a bargaining chip for use in buying peace from belligerents and who could not be bothered with the laws that they designed and agreed to. He saw British leaders who were not fulfilling their duty to their own laws. Britain's solely European focus drew him away from believing in the possibilities of the Empire. The Ethiopian Crisis, for the Rambler, was a moment of rejection of the West's supposed morality and Blyden's belief that whites were the pioneers of justice and progress. Was it then a step towards Pan-

[343] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 19, 1935, p. 4.
[344] Asante, Pan-African, p. 174.

Africanism? Pan-African thought was not absent from "Rambling Talks," but it certainly was not a definitive characteristic of the column. He saw Ethiopia as a point of reference for blacks across the world, but that sort of vision soon fell away from the Rambler in light of increasingly critical moments in Sierra Leonean history that followed the crisis.

The Ethiopian Crisis gave him a solid and final push towards disillusionment with the Empire and the West. In the last few years of his career at the *SLWN*, he continued to articulate a much more consistent loss of faith in the British leadership, the League and the West. India's increasing nationalism, he thought, should have inspired black and African groups around the world, including the NCBWA and the WAYL, to follow India's lead and practice stronger self-assertion, especially considering Britain's continued timidity.[345] The WAYL eventually won over his support because they transmitted a resolution to the Tories denouncing their "betrayal" of Ethiopia, which made up for the "sin of omission" the Colony had committed by not voicing its own disapproval. The WAYL, he said, had successfully saved Sierra Leone's face by letting the British know that the coloured sections of the Empire detested the "most disgraceful climb down known in morality and international justice."[346] But that morality was still a British morality. The standards against which he measured the British failure were their own.

[345] See "Rambling Talks," SLWN, October 2, 1937, p. 8 for reference to India's example and March 19, 1938, p. 12 for references to Britain's timidity.
[346] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, June 18, 1937, p. 9.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

This work has not offered up the Rambler as a whole. Speaking of the Rambler in the context of the Creole problematic cannot properly capture him as a commentator on certain local issues of little relevance to cultural and political identity. But what it has offered is the Rambler as someone attempting to shape the Creole identity and agenda while struggling with British abandonment and chiefly encroachment.

Chapter two shows the Rambler trying steadily to assimilate that which was still of any merit from British imperial culture while at the same time trying to make Creoledom as inviting and uplifting as it could be to native peasants. He wanted to create a new civilizing agenda, one controlled by Creoles and inviting to Protectorate natives.

Chapter three shows the Rambler's struggle with the agricultural realities of Sierra Leone. He believed that agricultural progress would help to create a more self-sufficient, and productive Sierra Leone for both natives and Creoles. The Creoles, he felt, should have more actively pursued agriculture because of the pressures from both native and British culture. Blyden's claims that Africans, Creoles included, should by nature be agriculturalists resounded strongly in his columns. He also pointed to native agricultural self-reliance in order to inspire the Creoles. The British civilizing mission held up industrial development as a basis for greater progress. Agricultural industry, thus, would have allowed the Creoles to synthesize the agricultural aspects of African and British culture. To him, this was a good starting point for resolving the issues within the Creole problematic. But his hopes were overly idealistic. His reliance on the ideals presented by both the British civilizing mission and Blydenesque conceptions of the African affinity

for communing with nature put him on a collision course with the Creoles' comfortable commercial culture and their apathy towards farming.

The fourth chapter outlines his final break with the conception of the moral superiority of British leaders. No longer do we see the Rambler apologizing for British failures or defending the civilizing mission. Instead we see a protestor against the West's failure, increasingly using racial differentiation to explain the British leaders' actions. But we also see that he could not give up on British morality. He thought British failures in Ethiopia signalled that they could no longer claim any moral authority. But the Creoles, he felt, were certainly aware of the British violations of imperial morality and the West's failure left them the best-suited in all of West Africa to do speak about it. Constant throughout these three thematic studies is the Rambler's need to discuss the merits, or lack thereof, of the civilizing mission. During the beginning of the twentieth century, he could not deny the need for supposed British altruism. But by the mid-thirties, he finally realized that the British justification for colonization was nothing but a facade.

In terms of how the Rambler treated the natives, he maintained a rhetorically idyllic presentation of the native peasantry. Led initially by noble chiefs, then, in his later period, by power hungry slavers and their deceptive heirs, the peasantry remained innocent. It was the Creoles' job to reach out to them in order to properly civilize them. The Rambler preached that the natives were full of potential and that unity between them and the Creoles would herald a new prosperity in Sierra Leone. But those beliefs, too, were fragile. When a possible native uprising brought Creole safety into question, that rhetoric fell by the wayside, revealing an underlying distrust and fear of the natives.

This work helps to correct the neglect the Rambler has received in Sierra Leonean historiography. This exploration does not suggest that the trends in the historiography around him are faulty. It outlines the trajectory of one Creole's struggle to define his place within a changing Sierra Leonean society that threatened to render his people culturally and politically obsolete. Rather than the limited glimpses at his ideas that the previous treatments of him provide, what is visible here is a protracted struggle. He struggled with the same question that plagued the peninsular Sierra Leoneans since the Colony began: how to be both African and English at the same time. The answer had traditionally been Creoledom. But the Rambler had to deal with the threat of an increasingly racist and profit-centred white colonial political infrastructure and a demographically superior native culture that both increasingly attempted to subvert Creole power. The Rambler responded to those threats by appropriating the language of the civilizing mission and by insisting that Creoledom be made as accessible as possible to any and every non-Creole in the Colony and Protectorate.

His agricultural vision and the role he expected the British and other westerners to play in it reveals the command he held over the concept during his early period. He tried to hold the British to their own stated agenda and morality by criticizing their lack of initiative and encouraging the execution of what he thought was a simple, straightforward task, easily surmountable by focused cooperation between Creole industry and British support. The Ethiopian crisis turned him against a colonial power that refused to assist another country in need despite Britain's central role and legal obligations within the League of Nations. The civilizing mission and Britain's supposed affinity for justice and fair play became the Rambler's rhetorical tools that he could use to inform the rest of

Sierra Leone of Britain's hypocrisy. But by appropriating that language, the Rambler set the Creoles as the arbiters of progress. The British were no longer reliable and Creoles could begin to set the developmental pace for Sierra Leone since they were the ones best equipped to channel the old, British, philanthropic altruism that had produced the dream of Sierra Leone in the first place. By removing the British standard from the civilizing mission and replacing it with a Creole one, the Rambler could then redefine what it meant to progress. No more would he have to worry about pressure from the British end of the Creole problematic because the Creoles were now setting the tone.

In dealing with the pressure from the African end of the spectrum, the Rambler tried a separate approach during each of his periods. His agricultural push promised that by being more industrious in growing food, Creoles would be able to meet both British standards of hard work as well as an African affinity towards nature. It was to native work habits that the Rambler thought that Creoles interested in agricultural industry should aspire. By adopting native foods and farming styles and using European industrial methods, the Rambler thought that Creoles could successfully reach out to both poles to draw them closer together into the Creole center. During the later period of his writing, though, he went about reducing the pressure the opposite way. Whereas during the first period, his push for greater agricultural development tried to introduce Creoles to that part of their African heritage in an effort to make them reach out to the natives, the second period saw him try to entice the natives into seeking out the Creoles by making Creoledom more attractive to them. He identified the paramount chiefs and the rising educated Protectorate elite as obstacles to Sierra Leonean development. The chiefs, he claimed, pursued their own agenda unconcerned with their own subjects. With promises

of a higher standard of living, greater political input and less corruption, the Rambler hoped to bring the mass of peasants around to a stronger affiliation with Creoledom.

How then should history discuss the Rambler's trajectory? Should he be seen as a nationalist in development or as a loyal imperial subject struggling with a final realization of the fallacy of British rhetorical altruism? Certainly, the Rambler's greatest struggle was with his own faith in the imperial ideal and the civilizing mission. But he clung to it, despite the numerous defeats his optimism suffered. His goal in agricultural development was self-sufficiency. But self-sufficiency was a vehicle of progress, not grounds for secession. The Empire's failures in that regard were not grounds for a dismissal of the imperial project. The failure of his agricultural hopes left him without a victory under a civilizing mission that he felt should have drawn all the parties involved towards accomplishing the goal. However, he later approved of the WAYL because they, in his opinion, gave Sierra Leoneans a chance to finally draw together, even though it was in opposition to an incompetent imperial apparatus. He wanted to use that unity to get Downing Street's attention,[347] but not to throw off the colonial yolk. Any thoughts of his concerning independence were not aggressively self-assertive. Even while supporting the WAYL and its criticisms, the Rambler held on to his claims of Sierra Leone's Empire loyalty.[348] In any case, he certainly could conceive of a Sierra Leonean nation, but it did not follow the same political arc as the more aggressive nationalists of the independence era. What we are left with then, in terms of the Rambler's trajectory, is a struggling transition from an enthusiastic, energetic, optimistic believer in the colonial project, the merits of the civilizing mission, and the bright imperial future of sisterhood with Britain

[347] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 29, 1939, p. 12.
[348] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, July 22, 1939, p. 12.

that waited for Sierra Leone, towards a disenchanted, cynical, racialized critic of all the members of the colonial apparatus, save his own people, for whom the WAYL provided a welcome new option.

In terms of the Rambler's historiographical significance, what this examination of him suggests is that the aggressive nationalists should not be considered to be definitive in terms of the grand picture of Sierra Leonean opinion. Aside from them, we have the Rambler, who suggests that the certainty with which many of these nationalists operated was not characteristic of the Creole body at large. The evolution of Sierra Leonean political and cultural dynamics during the early twentieth century did not allow for a Creole position of certainty. Discussing the problems Creoles faced was a matter of constant negotiation. Some matters, like agriculture or the Ethiopian crisis, required the Rambler to assume both a separate identity as well as address a different audience. The separate identities often were contradictory. He tried to speak about agriculture to an audience of Creoles and Britons as an imperial Creole subscribed to the civilizing mission's agenda *and* a channeler of Blyden at the same time. He tried to speak about the Ethiopian crisis as an African black man celebrating Ethiopia's freedom *and* as a Western imperial citizen. These positions were impossible to reconcile and that impossibility needs to be considered throughout Creole historiography.

Creole historiography has not focused enough on the individual failures of the Creoles to meet the challenges presented by the Creole problematic. What is presented instead are the high points in Creole political and cultural history through the victories of Creole leaders and thinkers. A fuller appreciation of the Creoles as a people requires the maintenance of an image of a people whose very identity was a challenge that was not

always met with victories and often faced defeat. This exploration of the Rambler provides an account of a Creole who believed in ideas that ultimately failed. A complete picture of Creoledom needs more of these kinds of accounts. A history of the failed ideas and the abandoned expectations has to accompany any narrative of triumph or ascendancy. Such a history should try to capture more than just the elites within that narrative that manage to strike resounding, accessible tones with their countrymen. Without the failures, the struggle towards development or nationhood remains partially covered up and the entirety of the dynamic process of cultural and political progression stays poorly articulated.

What this work attempted to do was to look to the Rambler as a sort of mid-tier Creole thinker, not one of the significance of Bankole-Bright or Lewis, but certainly not an uneducated or ignorant one. Historians should look to that middle section of the Creoles for answers about what it meant to be a Creole rather than the elites who came to focus the ideas within popular Creoledom. Those Creoles can reveal other ways the Creole problematic can be applied. For instance, beyond the political context here, the struggle between African and English identities can be considered in terms of an economic or commercial identity, a religious identity, or a marital or sexual identity. All of these aspects are somewhat detectable within the Rambler's work, but by increasing the attention history pays to other individuals in the intellectual middle ground in the Colony, we can better understand the push and pull between England and Africa in Sierra Leone.

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