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John Chidley's
VINDICATION
 Of HIMSELF,
 From the
SLANDER
 AND
CALUMNY

Cast upon Him,
 In the Sixth and Seventh Pages
 of a Book, entitled, *Reflec-
 tions upon the Constitution and
 Management of the Trade to
 Africa, &c.*

LONDON, 2
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WHY the *African Company*,
 upon whose Advice and In-
 fligation, and at whose Ex-
 pence, the aforesaid *Book* is
 believed by all Men to have been written,
 should either *themselves*, or by their Instru-
 ctions given to *others*, invade, and endea-

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your to supplant and diminish my *Credit* and *Reputation*, is what I never gave them Occasion for ; nor on all the Reviews I am able to make of my Conduct, during the whole time I served the said Company, imagine the Reason of, or divine the Motive unto.

Seeing as no Person whatsoever, doth more than my self judge the *Trade to Africa*, either to be more indispensably necessary, in reference to our *West-India Colonies* and *Plantations*, by supplying them with *Negroes* ; or, in divers Respects, to be improveable, to the Benefit and Opulency of *Great-Britain* : So, considering my own Meanness, I never had the Confidence, (whatsoever my private and personal Opinion was) to dare make my Approaches and Addresses to a Parliament, in presuming to suggest and signify, how the one or the other of these might be the most effectually promoted and compassed.

And tho the sinking of the Stock of the present *African Company* from 300 l. (at which it once was) to 4 l. which is the most it is now transferable at, doth demonstratively and uncontrollably shew, that neither the furnishing our *West-India Plantations* with *Negroes*, nor the Management of

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of the *African Trade*, by the way of Exportation from hence thither, and Importation from thence into the *Dominions* of *Great-Britain*, is longer and further practicable by the present *African Company* ; yet I never listed my self in the Number, and much less became a Partisan in behalf of those, who are Complainers of, and Petitioners against the said *Society*. And whereas their seeing me (often before my Examination) in the Lobby of the *House of Commons*, may have begotten in them a Surmise and Jealousy, that my attending there, was in order to minister and assist, in the getting the present *African Company* to be dissolv'd : I do solemnly declare, That it was not out of Choice ; so it was much less in Subserviency to any such Design, that I went thither ; but that being ordered and commanded by Sir *Richard Onslow*, Speaker of the *Honourable House of Commons*, and *John Ward, Esq;* Chairman of the *Committee*, to appear there, I should have both made my self guilty of a greater Transgression, and also have become liable to a more just and severe Punishment, than the doing thereof, could either in Wisdom or Equity, render me criminal towards the *Company* ; or without their departing from all the Rules of Justice, expose

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and subject me in the least to their peevish and angry Resentment. And whatsoever Offence it may give to the said Company, yet I humbly presume it will not be displeasing to others; that I do here freely declare, that when I was at the *Bar* of the *House of Commons*, and had Questions put to me, I did answer them with that Unreservedness and Truth, which became a sincere and honest Man; in that I profess myself to be an avow'd and declar'd Enemy to the Principles which the afore-said *Company* would have all who serve under them, to govern themselves by; namely, of sacrificing Conscience towards God, as well as the being esteemed Persons of Virtue and Integrity among Men, in Favour of, and in Subordination unto their narrow, secular, and Society-Designs.

Nor can I on this Occasion here omit the interposing and subjoining, that if all which they have caused to be published against others in the fore-mentioned *Book*, stiled *Reflections upon the Constitutions and Trade to Africa, &c.* be of the same Complexion and *Caliber* with those of which they have endeavour'd to asperse and defame me, that they have thereby not only weakened and dis-served their own Cause, but have made themselves justly obnoxious, to the having

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a Character given unto, and fastened upon them, by the afore-said honourable and august Assembly, which, out of Deference to them, whom I once served, I will not so much as mention, lest they or their Hackney-Evidences should be able to say, I had stain'd my self with a Blot, which may be thought to favour of Ingratitude.

But to proceed to an Inquiry into, and Examination of what the forementioned *Company* charge me with, and accuse me of, while I was in their Service; namely, Of having, with respect to my own Gain and Interest, defrauded and injur'd them, as well as they were the *African Company*, as my Masters; I have two things to reply thereunto, in my own Vindication, which I defy them, either according to the Maxims of Reason, or in Consistency with the Rules of Law, to be able either so to evade, or to overthrow, as to give the least Umbrage for the Belief of what I am aspersed and calumniated with, whereof the first shall relate to the Weakness and Incompetency of the Testimony, on which I am reproached and defamed, in that the Fellow, whosoever he be, upon whose Information and Deposition the afore-said Calumny upon me is founded, is not only an alone and single Evidence, which ought not to be al-

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lowed sufficient to make, and much less to support an Accusation against any Man, and especially when many more, had there been any ground for it, must have been equally conscious thereof. But as *Joseph Sharpin*, who is named as having made a Deposition against me, did it upon the Temptation of being advanced from a common Sailor, in a private Ship, to be a Mate in a Ship of the Company's, called the *Bridgewater*. Which way of Procedure, in the supplanting and diminishing of any Person's Reputation, is not only shamefully scandalous, and signally unjust, in those who use it, but reduceth those to an Impossibility of vindicating and justifying themselves, from and against the Calumnies thrown upon them by such little Varlets, who will perjuriously attack any Man's Reputation, if they have the least Encouragement given them of raising themselves by doing it. However it being evident, that the said Deponent was a common Sailor, I do hope that I may be allowed to suggest and intimate, that the Testimony of such a one should not be held and accounted sufficient for the undermining and blasting of any Person's Credit and Reputation; in that, generally speaking, they of that Rank and Form, act from no other Principles, nor upon any other Views, save

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save their own Profit, and their being preferred, and who have neither Reverence for God, nor Regard for Men, when they come under the Impression of worldly Gain and Advancement. And on these Prospects, as the *Company* themselves do in effect acknowledge, the aforesaid Informant made the pretended Deposition, of which I complain of having been slandered and defamed. And before I conclude this Article, I think my self obliged farther to add, that whereas the said *Company*, or they who wrote the foremention'd Book, at their Entreaty, and upon their Cost, have laboriously studied to support and fortify their Defamations of me, by declaring in the aforesaid Book, p. 7. *That the Royal African Company have several Letters from Mr. John Snow, Agent at Gambia; Capt. Charles Cook, and Colonel Gawin Corbin in Virginia, containing long Narratives of many gross Frauds and Abuses committed by me, while I was in their Service at Gambia; but which they omit the publishing of till further Occasion.* I cannot omit the making three brief Reflections, without being wanting in asserting my Honesty, and the doing Justice to my self; whereof the first is, That no Man who alloweth himself the Liberty of thinking, either will or can believe, that the divulging of those
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Narratives would have been suspended and delay'd till hereafter, but that they did foresee, and were sensible, that the communicating them to the Publick, and particularly to the Parliament, would have furnished me with a Handle of detecting and laying open their Tricks and Chicaneries in their own Actings, as well as in discovering their Briberies, in procuring mercenary People to write, talk and discourse at random, of Persons of whom they know nothing that was justly blameable; but of whom the *Company* had not only entertain'd a Prejudice, but to whom they bore Malice, without the least ground administer'd by those Persons for rendering them justly obnoxious to either. *Secondly*, That no Person of common Sense, or who is desirous to be held and esteemed vertuous, can put any other Construction upon the aforesaid Insinuations and Suggestions, but they were maliciously designed to asperse and blacken a Person, against whose Credit they had neither moral nor legal Evidence to bring; but were forced to defame him under the Umbrage and Shadow of those whom I just now mentioned. At which Rate of Procedure, as every Man's Reputation is made precarious, so would their Lives be also, if made liable to their Judgment

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ment and Sentence: And I should take it as a great Favour, if the Author of that scandalously false Book would please, when he writes again, to put his Name to it. *Thirdly*, That two of those Persons, whose *Narratives* of my Frauds, it is alledged, the *African Company* have, were never in *Africa* during my Service and Residence there; nor, I believe, never saw me in their Lives; and the other Person never was in *Africa*, but is an Inhabitant of *Virginia*: So that whatever hath been declared by them in Diminution of my Reputation, must be only from Reports they have receiv'd from others, and not from their own personal Knowledge: Which Method of breaking in upon Mens Credit, if it come to be allowed, there is no Person can be safe and covered (especially from some Members of the *African Company*) from the being slandered and defamed of being guilty of the most infamous Crimes imaginable.

So that having now not only fully dispatched the Article, and particularly of the Weakness and Incompetency of the Testimony of the single and alone Witness, alledged to have depos'd against me, that I had defrauded and injured the *African Company*, when I was in their Service; but also have both spoken unto, and cleared divers other things of

of Alliance thereunto, and consequent upon it; I come now to shew and demonstrate, that as I never was, nor durst be guilty of so ill a thing, as to injure and defraud my Masters, who had employed me; so it was not so much as Physically practicable by me towards the *African Company*, even in Case I had been tainted and corrupted with the greatest Inclination thereunto. For as I never did receive from the said Company, from the 4th of September, 1704. to the last of June, 1706. above 3800 *l.* in real Value that whole time; so they themselves, by the Account delivered to the Curfitor Baron of the *Exchequer*, do own and acknowledge, that the maintaining the Fort at *Gambia*, cost them 8000 *l.* Sterling: Which Sum given in by them for the maintaining the aforesaid Fort, I do positively and seriously affirm, that the major part of what was expended thereupon, was paid and disbursed by me out of the Produce of the 3800 *l.* in Goods, which I have mentioned, to have been sent unto, and received by me. But as that Account deliver'd in by the *Company* is fictitious and scandalously false, I shall endeavour to let the World know how I dispos'd of the aforesaid Sum of 3800 *l.*

For

For over and besides the Charges of the Fort for twenty one Months, I did purchase and procure for the said *Company* (as appears by their Books ready to be produced) three hundred and twelve Slaves, at 4 *l.* Sterling per Head, is — *l.* 1248 00 00
 21926 Pound of Elephants
 Teeth, which, great and
 small together, cost at } 416 10 00
 least 38 *s.* per Cent.
 8900 Pound of Bees Wax, } 178 00 00
 at 40 *s.* per Cent. is
 1500 Barrs of Goods left
 in the *Company's* Stores } 175 00 00
 when I came away, at
 2 *s.* 6 *d.* each Barr, is
 To maintaining 312 Slaves }
 14 Months, at 1 penny } 546 00 00
 per Diem each Slave, is

2562 10 00

By this Account, which is real and true, there could be no more left to pay Mens Wages, providing them Victuals, &c. for 21 Months, than 1236 *l.* 10 *s.* It will from thence, and upon the whole thereof uncontrollably appear, that it was physically, as well as morally impossible for me to have in-

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injured and defrauded the said Company: So that by their endeavouring on that Topick, to undermine and weaken my Credit and Reputation, they have only fix'd on themselves a Character which I shall not name.

And that I may vindicate my self from those ungentleman-like Scandals and Calumnies cast upon me by Mr. Darnel, before the Honourable House of Commons last Wednesday, March 9, 1708. when he alledged, that the African Company had been at Law with me some time, and could not recover any thing. I do here own, that the said Company did prefer a Bill in Chancery against me; about 20 Months ago; upon my answering to which, they have not thought it fit since to proceed: So that I have been likewise obliged to prefer a Bill in the same Court against the Company, for my Salary and Commissions; but to which they have neither thought it for their Credit or their Interest hitherto to answer, although they have been served with several Writs from the Chancery Court for obtaining one; of all which they have taken no notice; the whole of their Design, in the one Case and the other, being to put me to great Charges; which, tho' by Reason of their Chicanery, I cannot avoid, yet must bare with Patience,

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tience, and receive Abuses into the Bargain, which is the general Usage to all their Servants.

Another thing was laid to my Charge which I never expected; and that was, that I run away with their Effects. Their Effects I left in their Warehouses, as by Receipts ready to be produc'd, if required, and Copies of all my Proceedings, the Originals they have in their own keeping, though they deny'd that I ever gave them any Account; which was so gross a Falsity, that no Gentleman, that had the least Spark of Honour, but would have blush'd when he said so. I own I left the Fort, and it was when I was not in a Condition to stir, having been sick eight Months, and had upwards of four hundred Convulsion-Fits in that time, and no Medicines nor Surgeons upon the Fort to assist me; but was oblig'd to come for England to recover my Health, by the Advice of all the Surgeons of Ships then in Gambia; and if they call this running away, then I am guilty, which I hope will be the Opinion of none but the African Company. Besides I had nothing to do; for the Company had neither Goods nor Ships there, that had I not been indisposed, I must have been only an idle Looker on, to see the Separate Traders purchase all the Merchandise that Place afforded. There

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The same Person, on the Day aforesaid, who affirmed to the Honourable *House of Commons*, that the *Fort of Gambia* was taken by the *French*, after the Agreement with the *Senegall Company*. Indeed I was surpris'd to hear so great a Falsity alledg'd to that *August Assembly*: But when I consider'd the Gentleman that said it was a Member of the *African Company*, I knew it was no wonder. And as I have been severely dealt with by the said Company, I'll endeavour to make the best Reprisals upon them I can, by representing their Proceedings to the World free from Partiality; whereof this Paper is but an Introduction, and a short Essay.

F I N I S.