

than a few of them resembled Defoe's Moll Flanders. In 1662 the Assembly found it advisable to prescribe the ducking stool for the "many brabbling women" who "often slander and scandalize their neighbours."¹⁶

On the other hand, fortune could favor "an honest industrious woman," such as Mistress Pierce who came over in the *Blessing* and lived at Jamestown for nearly twenty years (1610-29). She married Captain William Pierce who, in 1623, became lieutenant governor and captain of James City. We learn of her advance in the world from Captain John Smith, whom she encountered on a voyage to London. In his *General Historie*, he stated that "she hath a Garden at Jamestown, containing three or four acres [outside the village] where in one year she hath gathered neere an hundred bushels of excellent figges; and that, of her owne provisions, she can keep a better house in Virginia than heere in London for 3 or 400 pounds a year. Yet [she] went thither with little or nothing."¹⁷

Mistress Pierce probably rose higher than any other woman resident of early Jamestown, but we must not overlook John Pory's contention of 1619 that "we are not the veriest beggers in the world": here in Jamestown on Sundays "goes . . . a wife of one that in England had professed the black arte, not of the scholler, but of a collier of Croydon [who] weares her rough bever hat with a faire perle hatband, and a silken suite therto correspondent."¹⁸

The family could never develop in Jamestown as it had in the British Isles because of the shortage of women; in that respect the Virginia capital was also unlike the contemporary towns of New England; it was a predominantly male settlement. For the whole colony, the ratio of men to women was about three to one, but on the island it must have been nearer