

deer. They also introduced them to the two most important crops of the New World—maize (corn) and tobacco. The men from Britain failed to plant corn; they preferred to get it from the Indians either by trade or by force—Captain John Smith proved himself adept at both methods.

Tobacco was an exotic product that was destined to fill the description of a “vendible commodity,” which had figured in the original planning. When the first settlers moored overnight at Kecoughtan before entering the James River, George Percy tells us that an Indian who had “a garden of tobacco” generously “distributed some to every one of us.” Those colonists who had smoked tobacco in England found the local leaf “poor and weak, and of a biting taste.” They much preferred the Spanish tobacco from Trinidad or Caracas, and soon seeds of these varieties were imported from the Caribbean and South America and planted in Virginia. The results were meager until about 1611 when one of the settlers began to experiment with seed from Trinidad, “partly from the love he hath for a long time borne unto it, and partly to raise [a] commodity” to sell in the British Isles.<sup>2</sup>

The first colonist to succeed in growing marketable West Indian tobacco was John Rolfe, formerly of Norfolk in East Anglia, who had reached Virginia from the Bermudas in 1610. His ship, *Sea Venture*, was blown aground there in a storm on the voyage out to Virginia, and several months passed before the survivors could build two pinnaces from the timbers of the wrecked vessel and proceed to the Chesapeake. During this delay, Mistress Rolfe gave birth to a daughter, christened Bermuda, who soon died; the mother died shortly after they reached the colony. No man among the early English colonists of Virginia, not even Captain John Smith, contributed more, ultimately, to making the plantation a going concern or was