

Characteristics of the People and Commerce among Them

The people Columbus has found are intelligent but overawed by great ships and men in elaborate clothes. With ruthless efficiency Columbus deals with their timidity by capturing a few men and forcing them to go with him. He then learns a bit of their language, teaches them a bit of Spanish, and learns about the islands. They believe that the strangers are wondrous indeed, and they provide for these strangers the best things they have. Columbus takes careful note of their travel habits and notes that, unlike Caesar's Gaul, these lands may be somewhat easy to take.

Nec sunt segnes aut rudes, quin summi ac perspicacis ingenii et homines qui transfretant mare illud. Non sine admiratione uniuscuiusque rei rationem reddunt, sed numquam viderunt gentes vestitas neque naves huius modi.

- 5 Ego statim atque ad mare illud perveni, e prima insula Indos violenter arripui, qui ediscerent a nobis, et nos pariter docerent ea quorum ipsi in hisce partibus cognitionem habebant. Et ex voto successit. Nam brevi nos ipsos et hi nos tum gestu ac signis, tum verbis intellexerunt magnoque
- 10 nobis fuere emolumento. Veniunt modo mecum tamen; qui semper putant me desiluisse e coelo, quamvis diu nobiscum versati fuerint hodieque versentur. Et hi erant primi qui id, quodcumque appellabamus, nuntiabant, alii deinceps aliis elata voce dicentes. "Venite, venite et
- 15 videbitis gentes aetherias!" Quamobrem tam feminae quam viri, tam impuberes quam adulti, tam iuvenes quam senes deposita formidine paulo ante concepta nos certatim

VOCABULARY

aetheri•us –a –um *adj* heavenly, ethereal
deinceps *adv* one after another, without interruption
desil•io –ire –ivi desultum to jump down, descend
edisc•o –ere edidici — to learn, get to know
ef•fero –ferre extuli elatum to promote, move forward
emolument•um –i n achievement, reward, benefit
impub•es –eris *adj* underage, childish
perspica•x –cis *adj* keen, penetrating
quamobrem *conj* for which reason
rud•is –e or rud•us –a –um *adj* rough, unshaped, rude, simple
segn•is –e *adj* slow, sluggish
transfret•o (1) to cross a strait or sea
vot•um –i n vow, plan, intention, prayer



Alexandre Colin's drawing of Columbus's arrival in the New World was created for *Le Magasin Pittoresque* published in Paris in 1844. (© Shutterstock.com)

visebant [magna iter stipante caterva], aliis cibum, aliis
 potum afferentibus maximo cum amore ac benevolentia
 20 incredibili.

Habet quaeque insula multas scaphas solidi ligni, etsi
 angustas, longitudine tamen ac forma nostris biremibus
 similes, cursu autem velociores. Reguntur remis
 tantummodo. Harum quaedam sunt magnae, quaedam
 25 parvae, quaedam in medio consistunt, plures tamen
 biremi, quae remigentur duodeviginti transtris, maiores.
 Cum quibus in omnes illas insulas, quae innumerae sunt,
 traicitur, cumque his suam mercaturam exercent et inter
 eos commercia fiunt. Aliquas ego harum biremium seu
 30 scapharum vidi, quae vehebant septuaginta et octoginta
 remiges.

In omnibus his insulis nulla est diversitas inter gentis
 effigies, nulla in moribus atque loquela. Quin omnes se
 intelligunt ad invicem. Quae res perutilis est ad id, quod
 35 serenissimum Regem nostrum exoptare praecipue reor,
 scilicet eorum ad sanctam Christi fidem conversionem. Cui
 quidem, quantum intelligere potui, facillimi sunt et proni.

VOCABULARY

ad invicem in turn

angust•us –a –um *adj* narrow

biremis biremis *f* bireme, ship having two banks of oars

caterv•a –ae *f* crowd

commerci•um –i *n* goods, trade, commerce