

Legends and Short Stories About Christopher Columbus

The First Landing of Columbus in the New World

By Washington Irving (Adapted)

It was on Friday morning, the 12th of October, that Columbus first beheld the New World. As the day dawned he saw before him an island, several leagues in extent, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though apparently uncultivated it was populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from all parts of the woods and running to the shore. They were perfectly naked, and, as they stood gazing at the ships, appeared by their attitudes and gestures to be lost in astonishment.

Columbus made signals for the ships to cast anchor and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat, richly attired in scarlet, and holding the royal standard; while Martin Alonzo Pinzon and his brother put off in company in their boats, each with a banner of the enterprise emblazoned with a green cross, having on either side the letters "F." and "Y.," the initials of the Castilian monarchs Fernando and Ysabel, surmounted by crowns.

As he approached the shore, Columbus was delighted with the purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the sea, and the extraordinary beauty of the vegetation. He beheld also fruits of an unknown kind upon the trees which overhung the shores.

On landing he threw himself on his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy. His example was followed by the rest. "Almighty and Eternal God," prayed Columbus, "who by the energy of Thy creative word hast made the firmament, the earth and the sea - blessed and glorified be thy name in all places! May thy majesty and

dominion be exalted for ever and ever, as Thou hast permitted thy holy name to be made known and spread by the most humble of thy servants, in this hitherto unknown portion of Thine empire."

Columbus, then rising, drew his sword, displayed the royal standard, and assembling around him the two captains and the rest who had landed, he took solemn possession in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, giving the island the name of San Salvador.