Christopher Columbus – Hero or Villain?

“They…brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks’ bells. They willingly traded everything they owned…They were well built, with good bodies and handsome features…They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane…They would make fine servants…With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.”

Columbus, describing his first encounter with Native Americans

“He had his faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great – his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer that lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities – seamanship.”

Samuel Eliot Morison, in the biography, Christopher Columbus, Mariner (1954)