

**THE SEAMAN'S
PRACTICAL GUIDE, FOR
BARBADOS AND THE
LEEWARD ISLANDS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649352661

The Seaman's Practical Guide, for Barbados and the Leeward Islands by Anonymous

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**THE SEAMAN'S
PRACTICAL GUIDE, FOR
BARBADOS AND THE
LEEWARD ISLANDS**

THE
SEAMAN'S PRACTICAL GUIDE,
FOR
BARBADOES AND THE LEEWARD ISLANDS;
WITH
OBSERVATIONS ON THE ISLANDS FROM BLANCO
TO THE ROCAS,
ON THE
COAST OF LA GUAYRA.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ON
MAKING THE LAND;

ALSO,

*Observations on the Hurricanes and Currents, with numerous Marks
and Bearings of Sunken Rocks, &c.*

ALL TAKEN FROM ACTUAL OBSERVATION,
BY A CAPTAIN IN THE ROYAL NAVY.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER, & CO. CORNHILL; W. GRAPEL, LIVERPOOL;
ATKINSON & CO. GLASGOW; W. REID & SON, LEITH;
AND A. BROWN & CO. ABERDEEN.

MDCCLXXXIII.

355.

ABERDEEN:
PRINTED BY G. CORNWALL,
22, BROAD STREET.



INTRODUCTION.

THESE practical observations were written for the Author's own use, in the event of being sent to the West Indies at any future period.

They are the result of nearly fourteen years' experience, and he was induced to arrange them in their present order, from a conviction that he would have been himself greatly benefited by such directions, when he was first employed in navigating these intricate seas ; and he is persuaded, that they will prove of considerable utility to others, particularly strangers, either in His Majesty's ships or in the mercantile service.

Throughout the West India Sea amongst the Islands, the bottom will be generally found to consist of coral rocks, and the great advantage of having chain cables, both in point of safety and economy, must be obvious to every one ; all vessels traversing these seas should be supplied with them, and these directions will frequently enable them to anchor securely in a proper depth of water.

The bearings are by compass, and the soundings in fathoms, unless where otherwise noted.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Observations on making Barbadoes and the Leeward Islands,	9
In making the West India Islands, when coming from the Eastward, ..	10
Remarks on passing to leeward of the High Islands which obstruct the course of the Trade-winds,	10
Observations on the Currents, and in Navigating amongst the Leeward Islands,	11
Remarks and Instructions to enable a Vessel to touch at as many of the Islands as possible, without having to beat to windward,	13
Observations on Hurricanes,	15
Page	Page
Barbadoes,	17
Tobago,	19
Trinidad,	20
Grenada,	23
The Grenadines,	24
St. Vincent's,	25
St. Lucia,	26
Martinique,	27
Fort Royal Bay,	28
St. Pierre's,	31
Dominico,	31
Prince Rupert's Bay,	32
Mariegalante,	34
Petite Terre,	35
Desada,	35
Saintes,	36
Guadaloupe,	38
Antigua,	40
Barbuda or Barbuda,	42
Redondo,	43
Montserrat,	43
The Island of Nevis,	44
Passage between Nevis and St. Kitt's,	44
St. Kitt's,	45
Old Roads, St. Kitt's,	45
St. Eustatia,	47
Saba,	47
Avis, or Bird Island,	48
St. Bartholomew,	48
St. Martin's,	49
Anguilla, Dog and Prickly Pear Islands,	50
Dog Island and Prickly Pear, ..	51
Sombbrero,	51
Anegada Island and Reef,	52
Virgin Gorda,	52
North Sound,	53
Virgin Islands,	53
The Great Dog, or Scrub Island Passage,	54
Old Jerusalem, or Fallen City, ..	55
Round Rock Passage,	55
Salt Island Passage,	55
Dead Chest Passage,	56
Norman's Island Passage,	56
Flanagan Key, or Witch Island, ..	57
Santa Monica Rock and Passage, ..	57
Flanagan Passage,	58
Passage between St. John's Island and Tortola,	58
Jos Van Dyke's Passage,	58
Anchoring Places,—Tortola Har- bour,	59
St. Thomas',	61
St. Thomas' Harbour,	61
Water Island and Passage,	62
Black-point Bay and Watering Place,	63
Marks for the Netley Rock,	64
Sail Rock Passage,	65
Santa Cruz, or St. Croix,	65
Christianstad,	66
Frederickstad, or West End,	66
Crab Island,	67
Porto Rico,	68
Mona Island,	69
Observations from the Island of Blanco to the Islands of the Rocas on the Spanish Main,	60
Island of Tortuga,	70
Cape Codera and the White Rock, to La Guayra,	71
Orchilla,	72
Islands of Rocas,	72

THE
SEAMAN'S PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR

BARBADOES AND THE LEEWARD ISLANDS.

**Observations on making Barbadoes and the Leeward
Islands.**

VESSELS making these Islands when coming from the northward, should be very careful not to cross the latitude of the low islands during the night, although their reckoning may be many degrees to the eastward of them. The low islands on which so many vessels have been lost, are Barbuda, Anguilla, Dog and Prickly Pear, Sombrero, Anegada, and its Horse Shoe Reef; of all these the first and last are the most dangerous. Before you see Anegada in clear weather, Virgin Gorda, and perhaps Tortola, will be seen very distinctly; distance is often deceiving at sea, and this land, by people not well acquainted with it, has been frequently mistaken for the east end of Porto Rico; and although directions have been given for avoiding this error, by observing that there is only open sea to the eastward of Virgin Gorda, and that to the eastward of Porto Rico lie several islands, yet it is necessary to observe that these islands, when the high land of Porto Rico is first discovered, cannot be seen, so that if you make the land at the close of day, it is proper to be aware of this circumstance.* It may be also remarked, that Anguilla and the Dog and Prickly Pear Islands cannot be seen until some time after you make St. Martin's, which is high land, and lying to the southward of these low islands. Barbuda is not only dangerous in the night time, but very dangerous in day light to strangers, having reefs under water all round, except at the very extreme S. W. point of the island.

* Probably this was the cause of the loss of a British Frigate on the Anegada Reef, in 1808.

**In making the West India Islands, when coming from
the Eastward.**

If you are bound to Jamaica, or to any of the Ports in the northern range of islands, (except the Bahamas) the safest land to make is the Island of Deseada, for if you should not see the land before night, you may haul to the northward, into the latitude of Montserrat, and have nearly sixty miles to run on during the night. Some people make St. Martin's or St. Bartholomew's, when bound to Tortola, St. Thomas's, St. Croix, and the islands to leeward, but in this case they should be aware of the dangerous Island of Barbuda, and also Anguilla; for a small error in the latitude, perhaps for want of an observation, or irregularity in the current, would place them in a very perilous situation, should they attempt to run on in the night.

Strangers should pass St. Martin's when they make it on the north side, the passage between it and Anguilla being clear; St. Bartholomew, Antigua, Nevis, and St. Kitt's on the south side, and also Barbadoes, that they may be able to fetch into Carlisle Bay; Trinidad on the north side, and Grenada and St. Vincent's on the south side. No particular directions are necessary for the other Islands, but what every seaman ought to know, that is, the danger of running upon the land, and running to leeward, or past it—a very serious occurrence for a dull sailing merchant vessel. This remark of running past the land is particularly applicable to the Island of Barbadoes, for which, see the directions for that Island.

**Remarks on passing to leeward of the High Islands
which obstruct the course of the Trade-winds.**

In passing these Islands, the only danger (where no other is mentioned) is the strong gusts of wind from the high land dismasting your vessel. Take also the precaution to keep far enough from the land to work your ship, should the wind suddenly shift and blow on the shore, which it often does during the day. When the wind is baffling, you will find it to your advantage to keep your course along shore as long as you have steerage way, notwithstanding all your sails may be aback, for it frequently happens that the wind comes round to its old quarter before you lose your head way, and by this means we have seen one ship get into another current of air, which brought her into a fresh breeze, while another in company, by altering her course to keep the sails full, lost the opportunity of getting into the breeze, and was detained by calms and baffling winds, great part of the day. We have often seen the after sails filled, with the

wind aft, while the head sails were flat aback, with the wind ahead, and which continued so long, that the foresail was hauled up to continue the head way.

Observations on the Currents, and in Navigating amongst the Leeward Islands.

THE uncertainty of the currents amongst the West India Islands, is well known to all who have had any experience in navigating these seas. The most careful and experienced seamen have often been greatly perplexed about them, and have as yet found it impossible to reduce their setting to a general system like the tides about the British Islands, and other coasts. As a warning to strangers, it may at once be remarked, that the current in general sets to the westward, nearly in the direction of the trade-wind, at the rate of from one to two miles an hour. In all our experience, we have never yet found what we could say was an easterly current out of sight of land, but have frequently felt it setting us from N. W. to north, so that a vessel lying up S. E. on the larboard tack, and the current setting N. N. W. would be very considerably benefited by it.

In working to windward amongst the Islands, great attention ought to be paid to the setting of the current. In the passages lying in an easterly direction between the Islands, it has been remarked, (and we have frequently experienced it) that when the current runs to leeward on one side of the passage, it runs to windward on the other—also, that it runs or sets to windward at both sides, and at the same time sets to leeward in the middle, and frequently the reverse.

In the day time, attention to the progress you make in getting to windward, by the appearance or bearings of the land, is the best rule you can have, first trying a short tack in shore, where, if you make little or no progress to windward, your best way is to stand across, and try the other side of the channel, and if that do not answer, the midchannel will most likely prove the best, for although contrary to the general opinion, we have often found it so; much, however, depends on the time of day. In the morning and evening you should endeavour to be near the shore, the north side of the passage in preference, where, if the wind be moderate, and the coast not much exposed to the general trade-wind, you are pretty certain of having the wind two or three points more off the land. In like manner, you should endeavour to be in the offing about one o'clock, P. M. as the wind generally blows more on the shore at that time. We have also observed, that the land and sea breezes prevail most where the land on the coast is low.

Should you be bound to a place to the eastward of you, and no land in the way, the best tack to be upon is the one on which you