



Eight Bells and Top Masts: Diaries from a Tramp Steamer

Christopher Lee, Christopher Lee.

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The late 1950s, twilight years of the British Empire, saw the end of the era of the 'tramp steamer' - coal-burning merchant ships that 'tramped' from port to port in the days before bulk carriers, hunting for any cargo that needed hauling to any place.

In this marvelous memoir Christopher Lee offers the diaries of a 'Lad' much like himself who, at the age of 17, took his first job aboard the tramp ship Empire Heywood. Over two years this Lad would get to travel through the Suez canal, into the Indian Ocean and across the Pacific - so acquiring a panoramic view of the fading empire - before returning home to England as a man.

The diaries give a splendid account of all the dramas of life aboard ship, with an eccentric cast of characters and a wealth of lively seafaring language. A third-person narrative from the author provides invaluable historical context.

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