

3.2 TALES OF THE FIVE TOWNS

This ain't a fourpenny doss, you know. lying down.'

A rough shake accompanied the words, and the man sat up.

'All right, my friend.'

The keeper, who was a good-humoured man, passed on without further objurgation.

The face of the younger man had grown whiter.

'Look here, Darkey,' he said, 'I believe I've done for.'

'Never say die.'

'No, just die without speaking.'

His head fell forward and his eyes closed.

'At any rate, this is better than some death I've seen,' he began again with a strange accession of liveliness. 'Darkey, did I tell you the story of the five Japanese girls?'

'What, in Suez Bay?' said Darkey, who had heard many sea-stories during the last two days, and recollected them but hazily.

'No, man. This was at Nagasaki. We were taking in a cargo of coal for Hong Kong. Hundreds of little Jap girls pass the coal from hand to hand over the ship's side in tiny baskets that hold about a plateful. In that way you