TRANSGRESSIONS

When youth and beauty are sacred the transgressions most feared are deformity and old age.

HOLY BATHING PLACE: ALLAHABAD

i.

Ancient Prayaga, where the Jumna meets the Ganga and where all India mingles together in holy pilgrimage.

Here in the deep shade of a Moghul wall rows of barbers attend the orthodox, for whom immersion at this hallowed place requires a total shaving of the head.

Nearby in an underground temple stands a sacred banyan tree which many Hindus believe will never die, first mentioned by a Chinese traveller over thirteen hundred years ago.

ii.

A smiling Brahmin sitting placidly under a bright yellow sunshade gives his blessing for a small fee.

A Rajasthani peasant clutching a bundle threads his way warily between buffalo carts, camels, and sauntering cows, between sadhus, gypsies and beggars.

A Delhi business man in a loincloth strolls along the sand watching the women throwing rose-petals into the Ganga, then lingers before a gaudy picture of Brahma at one of the many improvised stalls.