## L. Metempsychosis

W. Somerset Maugham

He was decently though far from richly clad. He had a small round cap of black silk on his head, and on his feet black silk shoes. His robe was pale green of the flowered silk which is made in Chia-ting, and over it he wore a short black jacket. He was an old man, with a white beard, long and for a Chinese full; his broad face, much wrinkled, especially between the brows, was benign, and his large horn spectacles did not conceal the friendliness of his eyes. He had all the look of one of those sages whom you may see in an old picture seated by a bamboo grove at the foot of a great rocky mountain contemplating the Eternal Way. But now his face bore an expression of great annoyance and his kindly eyes were frowning, for he was engaged in the singular occupation (for a man of his appearance) of leading a little black pig along the causeway between the flooded padi fields. And the little black pig, with sudden jerks, with unexpected dodging, ran hither and thither, in every direction but that in which the old gentleman wished to go. He pulled the string violently, but the pig, squealing, refused to follow; he addressed  it in terms of expostulation and of abuse, but the little pig sat on his haunches and looked at him with malicious eyes. Then I knew that in the Tang dynasty the old gentleman had been a philosopher who had juggled with facts, as philosophers will, making them suit the whims which he called his theories; and now, after who knows how many existences, he was expiating his sins in suffering in his turn the stubborn tyranny of the facts which he had outraged.