and the coincidences in their writings may be accounted for by their having drawn from a common source. The fact of Sophocles’ generalship is the less surprising if taken in connexion with the interesting remark of his biographer (whose *Life,* though absent from the earliest MS. through some mischance, bears marks of an Alexandrian origin) that he took his full share of civic duties, and even served on foreign embassies. The large acquaintanceship which this implies, not only in Athens, but in Ionic cities generally, is a point of main importance in considering the opportunities of information at his command. And, if we credit this assertion, we are the more at liberty to doubt the other state­ment, though it is not incredible, that his appointment as general was due to the political wisdom of his *Antigone.*

The testimony borne by Aristophanes in the *Frogs* to the amiability of the poet’s temper (ó β\* e⅛oλos *μ⅛> kvθaδ', etiκoλos* δ\* €K€Î) agrees with the record of his biographer that he was univer­sally beloved. And the anecdote recalled by Cephalus in Plato’s *Republic,* that Sophocles welcomed the release from the passions which is brought by age, accords with the spirit of his famous Ode to Love in the *Antigone,* The Sophocles who, according to Aristotle (*Rhet.* iii. 18), said of the government of the Four Hundred that it was the better of two bad alternatives (probably the same who was one of the *probuli),* may or may not have been the poet. Other gossiping stories are hardly worth repeating— as that Pericles rebuked his love of pleasure and thought him a bad general, though a good poet; that he humorously boasted of his own "generalship ” in affairs of love; or that he said of Aeschylus that he was often right without knowing it, and that Euripides represented men as they are, not as they ought to be. (This last anecdote has the authority of Aristotle.) Such trifles rather reflect contemporary or subsequent impressions of a superficial kind than tell us anything about the man or the dramatist. The gibe of Aristophanes (*Pax* 695 seq.), that Sophocles in his old age was become a very Simonides in his love for gain, may turn on some perversion of fact, without being altogether fair to either poet. It is certainly irreconcilable with the remark (*Vit. anon.)* that in spite of pressing invitations he refused to leave Athens for kings’ courts. And the story of his indictment by his son Iophon for incompetence to manage his affairs—to which Cicero has given some weight by quoting it in the *De senectute*—appears to be really traceable to Satyrus *(fl. c.* 200 b.c.), the same author who gave publicity to the most ridiculous of the various absurd accounts of the poet’s death— that his breath failed him for want of a pause in reading some passage of the *Antigone.* Satyrus is at least the sole authority for the defence of the aged poet, who, after reciting passages from the *Oed. Col.,* is supposed to have said to his accusers, "If I am Sophocles I am no dotard, and if I dote I am not Sophocles.” On the other hand, we need not the testimony of biographers to assure us that he was devoted to Athens and renowned for piety. He is said to have been priest of the hero Alcon, and himself to have received divine honours after death.

That the duty of managing the actors as well as of training the chorus belonged to the author is well known. But did Aeschylus act in his own plays ? This certainly is implied in the tradition that Sophocles, because of the weakness of his voice, was the first poet who desisted from doing so. In his *Thamyras,* however, he is said to have performed on the lyre to admiration, and in his *Nausicaa* (perhaps as coryphaeus) to have played gracefully the game of ball. Various minor improvements in decoration and stage carpentry are attributed to him—whether truly or not who can tell? It is more interest­ing, if true, that he wrote his plays having certain actors in his eye; that he formed an association for the promotion of liberal culture; and that he was the first to introduce three actors on the stage. It is asserted on the authority of Aristoxenus that Sophocles was also the first to employ Phrygian melodies. And it is easy to believe that *Aj.* 693 seq., *Trach.* 205 seq., were sung to Phrygian music, though there are strains in Aeschylus (*e.g. Choeph.* 152 seq., 423 seq.) which it is hard to distinguish essentially from these. Ancient critics had also noted his familiarity with Homer, especially with the *Odyssey,* his power of selection and of extracting an exquisite grace from all he touched (whence he was named the “ Attic Bee ”), his mingled felicity and boldness, and, above all, his subtle delineation of human nature and feeling. They observed that the balanced proportions and fine articulation of his work are such that in a single half line or phrase he often conveys the impression of an entire character. Nor is this verdict of antiquity likely to be reversed by modern criticism.

His minor poems, elegies, paeans, &c., have all perished; and of his hundred and odd dramas only seven remain. These all belong to the period of his maturity (he had no decline) ; and not only the titles but some scanty fragments of more than ninety others have been preserved. Several of these were, of course, satyric dramas. And this recalls a point of some im­portance, which has been urged on the authority of Suïdas, who says that "Sophocles began the practice of pitting play against play, instead of the tetralogy.” If it were meant that Sophocles did not exhibit tetralogies, this statement would have simply to be rejected. For the word of Suïdas (a.d. 950) has no weight against quotations from the lists of tragic victories (βιδασκαλhu), which there is no other reason for discrediting. It is distinctly asserted on the authority of the βώασκαλίαι that the *Bacchae* of Euripides, certainly as late as any play of Sophocles, was one of a trilogy or tetralogy. And if the custom was thus maintained for so long it was clearly impossible for any single competitor to break through it. But it seems probable that the trilogy had ceased to be the continuous development of one legend or cycle of legends—"presenting Thebes or Pelops’ line ”—if, indeed, it ever was so exclusively; and if a Sophoclean tetralogy was still linked together by some subtle bond of tragic thought or feeling, this would not affect the criticism of each play considered as an artistic whole. At the same time it appears that the satyric drama lost its grosser features and became more or less assimilated to the milder form of tragedy. And these changes, or something like them, may have given rise to the statement in Suïdas.

The small number of tragic victories attributed to Sophocles, in proportion to the number of his plays, is only intelligible on the supposition that the dramas were presented in groups.

If the diction of Sophocles sometimes reminds his readers of the *Odyssey,* the subjects of his plays were more frequently chosen from those later epics which subsequently came to be embodied in the epic cycle—such as the *Aethiopis,* the *Little Iliad,* the *Iliupersis,* the *Cypria,* the *Nosti,* the *Telegonia* (all revolving round the tale of Troy), the *Thebaica,* the Otχαλtαs aλωσιs, and others, including probably, though there is no mention of such a thing, some early version of the Argonautic story. In one or other of these heroic poems the legends of all the great cities of Hellas were by this time embodied; and though there must also have been a cloud of oral tradition floating over many a sacred spot, Sophocles does not seem, unless in his *Oedipus Coloneus,* to have directly drawn from this. He was content to quarry from the epic rhapsodies the materials for his more concentrated art, much as Shakespeare made use of Hollingshed or Plutarch, or as the subjects of Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* were taken from Sir Thomas Malory. As Sophocles has been accused of narrowing the range of tragic sympathy from Hellas to Athens, it deserves mention here that, of some hundred subjects of plays attributed to him, fifteen only are connected with Attica, while exactly the same number belong to the tale of Argos, twelve are Argonautic, and thirty Trojan. Even Corinthian heroes (Bellerophon, Polyidus) arc not left out. It seems probable on the whole that, within the limits allowed by convention, Sophocles was guided simply by his instinctive perception of the tragic capabilities of a particular fable.

To say that subsidiary or collateral motives were never present to Sophocles in the selection of a subject would, however, be beyond the mark. His first drama, the *Triptolemus,* must have been full of local colouring; the *Ajax* appealed powerfully to the national pride; and in the *Oedipus Coloneus* some faint echoes even of oligarchical partisanship may be possibly discerned