For lists of treatises upon the life and teaching of particular sophists, see Ueberweg, *Grundriss d. Gesch. d. Philos.,* i. §§ 27-32 *(History of Philosophy,* London, 1880). On the later use of the term “sophist,” see Rhetoric. (H. JA.)

SOPHOCLES, the most perfect, and next to Æschylus the greatest, of Greek tragic poets, was born 495 b.c. and died 406 B.c. As in the case of other Athenian cele­brities, various particulars of his life are handed down, few of which, however, deserve much attention, even the reports attributed to contemporaries being mostly trivial if not puerile. He is known to have reached old age, and his career as a dramatist is believed to have extended over more than sixty years (468-406). His father’s name was Sophillus, of the deme Colonus Hippius, the aristocratic quarter, where the Government of the Four Hundred was afterwards constituted. The family burial-place is said by the anonymous biographer to have been ten stadia from the city, on the Decelean Way. These facts run counter to the tradition, which seems to have been already discredited by Alexandrian critics, that Sophillus was an artisan. The date assigned for the poet’s birth is in accordance with the tale that young Sophocles, then a pupil of the musician Lamprus, was chosen to lead the chorus of boys *(ᾐφέωv λεκτοί, (Eel. Tyr.,* 18) in the celebration of the victory of Salamis (480 b.c.). The time of his death is fixed by the allusions to it in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes and in the *Muses,* a lost play of Phrynichus, the comic poet, which were both produced in 405 b.c., shortly before the capture of the city. And the legend which implies that Lysander allowed him funeral honours is one of those which, like the story of Alexander and Pindar’s house at Thebes, we can at least wish to be founded on fact, though we -should probably substitute Agis for Lysander. Apart from tragic victories, the event of Sophocles’s life most fully authenticated is his appointment at the age of fifty-five as one of the generals who served with Pericles in the Samian War (440-439 b.c.). Conjecture has been rife as to the possibility of his here improving acquaintance with Herodotus, whom he probably met some years earlier at Athens (see Herodotus). But the distich quoted by Plutarch—

'Ωιδὴv 'Ηροδότῳ τευξεv Σoφoκλης ἐτέωv ὢv∏έvτ' ἐπὶ πεvτήκovτα**—**

is a slight ground on which to reject the stronger tradition according to which Herodotus was ere this established at Thurii ; and the coincidences in their writings may be accounted for by their having drawn from a common source. The fact of Sophocles’s 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 :—Καλώς √ ∈7rαιδ∈υ(h7 και *ετράφη èv cυτrοplq, καϊ èv* πολιτεία και *èv πptσβ(ιaι<s efητaζeτo.* 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 the *Antigone.*

The testimony borne by Aristophanes to the amiability of the poet’s temper (ό δ ∈υκoλoς *p.iv èvGàH, eυκο∖ος* δ’ eκcι) 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 *prοbuli)* 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 Æschylus that he was often right without knowing it, and that Euripides represented men as they are, not as they ought to be. 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 *sq.),* that Sophocles in his old age was become a very Simonides in his love for gain, may turn on some perversion of fact,@@1 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 *(flor. 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 *(Ed. 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 (or Halon) in his old age, 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 Æschylus 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 coryphæus) 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 (6iασor) for the pro­motion of liberal culture ; and that he was the first to introduce three actors on the stage.@@2 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 *sq., Trach.,* 205 *sq.,* were sung to Phrygian music, though there are strains in Æschylus *(e.g., Choeph.,* 152 *sq.,* 423 *sq.*)*,* 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.

@@@1 If any of Sophocles’s elegies or odes were “pot-boilers,” this might he due rather to his easy temper (εὐκολία) in yielding to a prevalent habit of the time than to any meanness (βαvαυσία or γλισχρότηs).

@@@2 If this was so, it must have been previous to the appearance of the Orestean trilogy.