

philosophical, nor Lessing, in the wider field of criticism, was really radical enough. In their critical attempts they did not go to the root of the matter. Their successors have tried to improve upon them and to penetrate deeper into the recesses of all mental life and activity. With what results we shall see in the sequel. The reasons why both Lessing and Kant halted, as it were, half-way in their critical discussions were probably twofold. To begin with, they had an overwhelming material to deal with, all the inherited systems of ancient and modern philosophy and all the products of ancient and modern literature and learning, all the creations of ancient and modern art and poetry. In the middle of the eighteenth century, when Lessing and Kant started on their literary enterprises, the means of acquiring a tolerably comprehensive view of the great field of the mental labours of the past were exceedingly meagre. It was the time when the French Encyclopædists started the first attempt to arrange methodically the whole body of accumulated knowledge and learning; in fact, it was the beginning of what I have termed before the age of the encyclopædic treatment of knowledge and learning which lasted for a century.¹ This attempt to arrange methodically and to make inventory of knowledge went parallel with the critical movement. During that period we find continually that the greatest critics had to interrupt their critical work in order to gather the necessary information without which criticism was impossible or premature. We find this notably in the work of Lessing. And

21.
Obstruc-
tions to it.

¹ See vol. i. p. 34.